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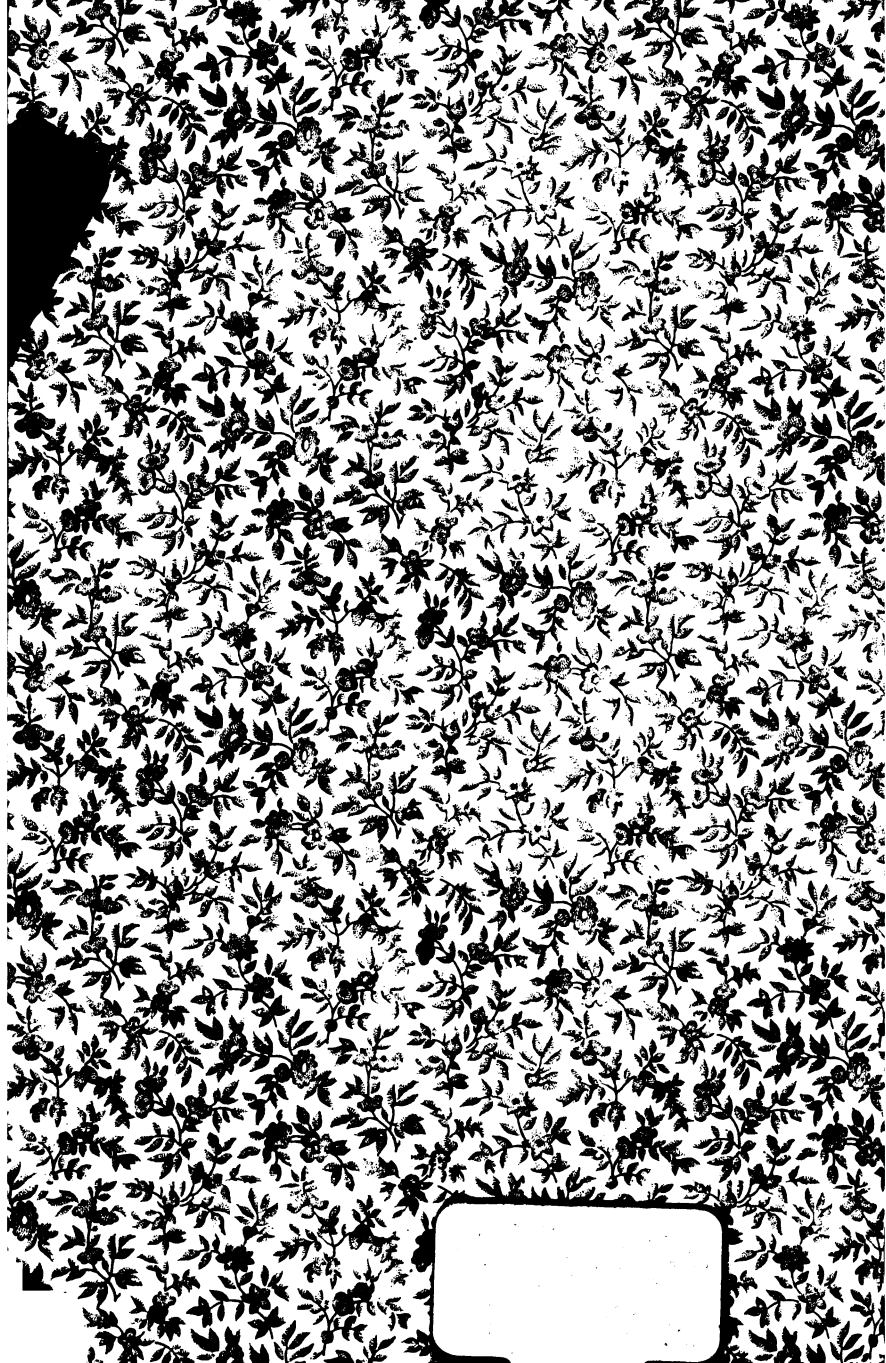
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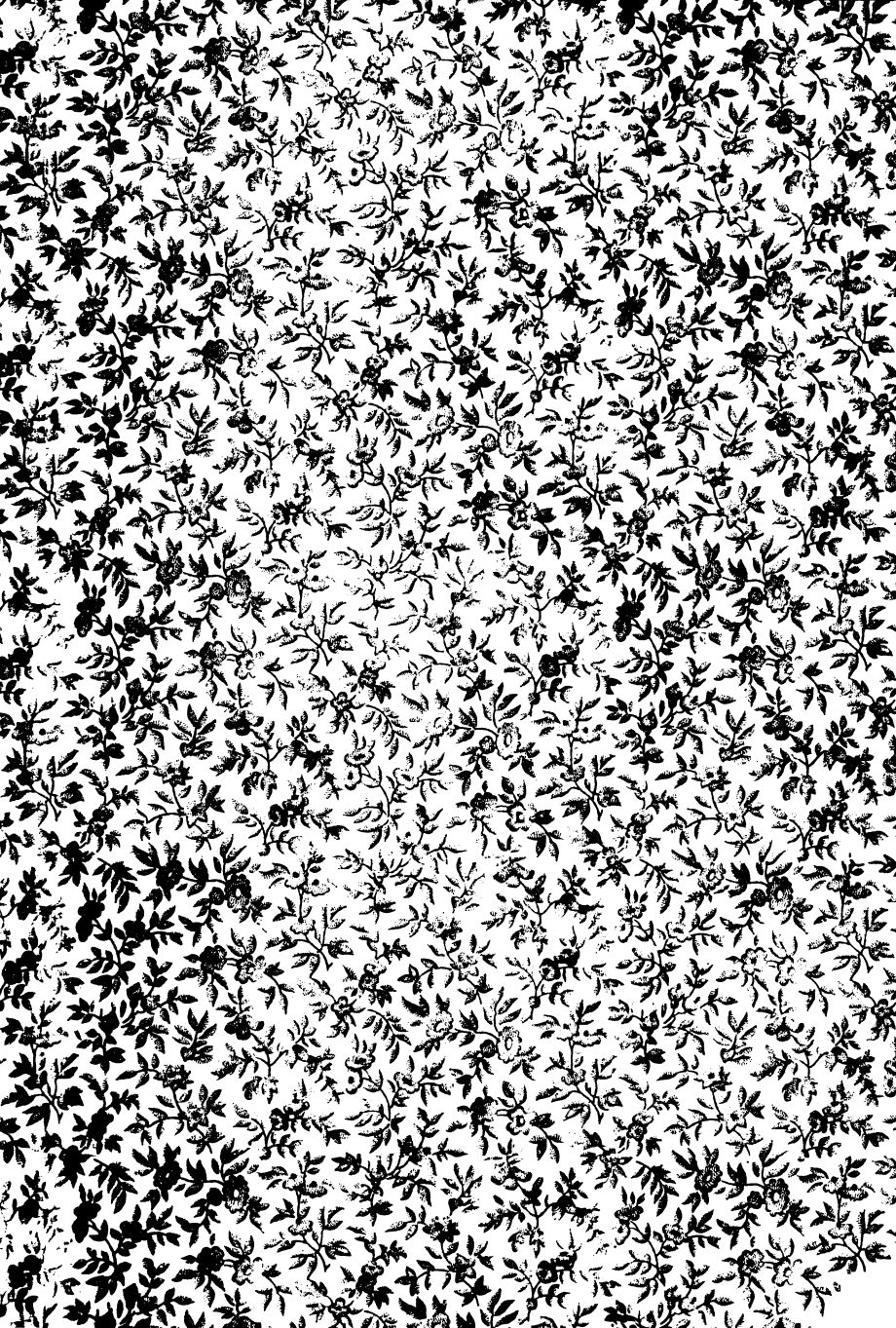
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1. *Saccharum Americanum.*

SONGS OF A HAUNTED HEART

100
C. 100

16
PUBLIC HISTORY



Very truly yours,
Hester Living.

THE HEART

AND THE

PUBLISHED BY THE
COMPANY PUBLISHERS

My friend,
Anna Living

SONGS OF A HAUNTED HEART

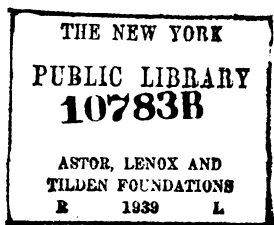
BY

MINNA IRVING

CHICAGO, NEW YORK AND SAN FRANCISCO
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1888

1887



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TO
MY FRIENDS
THE
Journalists of New York
THESE POEMS
ARE
INSCRIBED

PREFACE.

SINCE the "Haunted Heart" first appeared in the *Century* for December, 1885, it has been the target of many pens, and its writer the subject of much criticism; to all of which I have made no reply.

But the time is now at hand for me to tell its story, that my readers may know the circumstances from which it was evolved, and judge it accordingly, and therefore justly.

From childhood I was a close student of erudite authors, a dreamer, an idealist. When I was eighteen, to this old house, with its windows embrasured deep in ivy, and the lilies growing all along its walks, came the prince of journalists, whose name had long been to me a synonym for grace, gallantry, and greatness. Clergymen and college-boys had hitherto bounded my horizon, but my new friend was of a different mould. To a brilliant mind, cultivated by extensive travel, were added the charms of magnificent manners, an imperial bearing, a princely person, and a temperament peculiarly attractive to women—impulsive, passionate, and daring.

When he took leave of me that summer night, it was in a way well calculated to impress a romantic maiden, murmuring the conventional good-bye in tones fraught with tender meaning, and suddenly lifting my hand to his lips with an air of the deepest devotion.

For days that passionate kiss burned upon my hand and turned my blood to flame. I could not write, I could not read, and my once beloved flowers were aliens to me. I sat in my chamber all day with closed eyes, revelling in the recollection of that rapturous moment, living it over and over again, so much of passion and adoration had he managed to infuse into the mere touch of his lips.

Remember, I was very young and very romantic, and the world had been bounded by my books and my garden-walls. Later came his letters—perfumed pages hinting delicately, in subtle phrases, of the intoxication of love. Ah, those letters! Would I dare to read them over, I wonder, alone, in the dreariness of winter snows.

When the leafless trees about my dwelling were rocking in the fierce blast, he came again—this time as a lover.

Spare me the recital of what followed: his impassioned pleading; the fervid eloquence with which he pictured the white villa among the roses on the blue Italian sea, where life would be a round of pleasure at his side; the vehement anger with which he heard my faltered refusal; his last dramatic appeal to me in the open doorway; the dismal clang of the garden-gate behind him, and the despair that darkened my spirit in the after-days when the snow was

piled high at the door, and the dead ivy tapped like skeleton fingers on the frosted panes.

I was alone with my own thoughts, and what wonder if during those winter weeks I saw his graceful figure in the twilight shadows, or felt his influence round me when midnight candles burned dimly, or lay awake night after night with every nerve strained, listening, listening for the click of the gate-latch and his steps upon the snow.

The memory of that time was indelibly impressed upon me. The suns of summer could not bleach its shadow from my soul, nor the dews and rains wash it away.

So I made a *confidante* of the Muse and wrote the "Haunted Heart."

M. I.

TARRYTOWN, Nov. 28, 1888.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Haunted Heart,	9
The Cavalier,	13
A Rosebud Immortal,	16
The Enchantress,	17
The Dead Man's Clock,	20
The Lace-maker,	23
Christmas at Ingle Farm,	26
The Chimes,	30
A Legend of St. Valentine, ✓	31
✓ The Ghost of Nathan Hale,	34
The Soul,	36
Mabel Clare,	38
The Rosebud from Dorothy's Hair,	39
The Flower of Flame,	42
✓ The Old Church at Sleepy Hollow,	43
From Landen to Neerwinden,	46
The Robin's Rain-song,	47
At the Golden Dragon,	49
Love's Hour,	52
The Cloudlets,	53
Decoration Day,	54
Independence Day,	57
All in the Olden Time,	59

	PAGE
Golden-rod,	60
The Robin,	62
Dorothy Gray,	63
The Rooks,	67
The Poet's Lilies,	69
A Faded Flower,	72
The Song of a Star,	75
The Nightingale,	77
The White Bird of Merivale,	79
The Knight in Silver Mail,	82
Her Choice,	85
Psyche,	87
The Green Bush,	90
The Bonbonnière,	91
Dead in Dakota,	93
The Fate of a Flirt,	95
The Ghosts of the Manor,	97
The Christmas Bride,	100
Roses in Palestine,	102
The Swallow's Story,	105
Fourth of July,	107
The Second Wife,	109
On Christmas Eve,	111
Two Gay Deceivers,	112
Two Views of It,	114
Beauty's Suitor,	115
The Owl and the Lover,	118
The Other Side,	119
The Queen of May,	122
Dolly of Devonshire,	125
Love's Lily,	127
Love and Fashion,	130

CONTENTS.

xiii

	PAGE
The Spirit of Sappho,	132
The Student,	133
Love Forgot,	135
The Statue,	137
Romance,	140
The Lady of the Grange,	141
The Shell,	144
Her Flirtation,	145
To the Poet,	148
My Treasures,	149
The Christmas Dream,	150
Seventy-Odd,	154
A Dead Bouquet,	157
Gurney's Roses,	160
The Old and the New,	162
✓ Paulding the Patriot,	164
The Wage of Castle Clyde,	167
Christmas Angels,	170
Roland's Rose,	172
Voices from Eternity,	175
The Sons of Theta Delta Chi,	177
The Gift of Roses,	179
Thanksgiving Day,	181
The Promise,	183
Heliotrope,	185
✓ Shakespeare,	187
The World's Way,	187
Bessie's Walk,	189
Snow-flowers,	191
The Lady's Leap,	191
✓ The Guest of Christmas Eve,	196
A Dream of Death,	199

	PAGE
A Winter Idyl,	203
The Arctic Watch,	205
Legend of Hallowee'n,	207
Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty,	209
Two New Year Eves,	210
The Count's Crime,	213
Mabel's Rose,	216
The Coquette's Album,	218
Love's Tragedy,	220

SONGS OF A HAUNTED HEART.

THE HAUNTED HEART.

At the parting-hour we stood
In the doorway dim ; the night
Underneath a cloudy hood
Hid her jewelled brow from sight.
Like a guest who cometh late,
Wind of Winter as it passed
Rudely shook the garden gate,
Angry that the latch was fast ;
For the year was dark and cold,
And the frost was on the wold.

Then my lover, straight and tall,
Graceful as the gods of Greece,
Breathed in murmurs musical
Of a land beyond the seas.
Pleading softly : " Come away.
There's a yacht beyond the bar
Waits to spread at dawn of day
Wings of white to waft us far,

Where the year is never cold,
Nor the frost upon the wold.

“Let your blue eyes on my hours,
Stars of beauty, ever shine.
O'er the seas to lands of flowers
Sail with me and so be mine.”
Half a sob and half a sigh
Was my answering “No.” Ah me!
Duty then, not Love, chose I,
Though I knew my life would be,
Like the year, both dark and cold,
Frost forever on the wold.

Round me close his arms had been,
When he heard my faltered “No”;
Coldly, sadly, did he then
Loose his hold and let me go;
Lifted to his lips my hand
In a passion of regret,
Leaned a little forward and
Kissed my cheek—with tears 'twas wet;
Then was gone into the cold,
And the frost across the wold.

Snow of Winter! some may tell
What a merry guest thou art,
But to me each flake that fell
Fell and froze upon my heart.



Wind of Winter! when thy wail
 Rose at midnight, from my sleep
I have wakened but to quail
 At my loneliness, and weep,
While the house was dark and cold,
And the snow lay on the wold.

When the days were short and drear,
 And the nights long, and a mouse
In the wall would make you fear,
 Came a Presence in the house.
Semblance of my love it wore,
 Eyes, and hair, and manner, too,
Just the same as weeks before,
 When he sighed that long adieu,
Ere he passed into the cold,
And the frost across the wold.

First one night when raged a storm,
 And I started from a dream,
Standing there, I saw his form
 In the firelight's ruddy gleam ;
Arms outstretched in pleading way,
 Eyes that with entreaty shone ;—
Since that time, by night or day
 I am nevermore alone,
Though the year be hot or cold,
Frost or flower upon the wold.

If I read at noon or night,
 He is just behind my chair.
If I walk in broad daylight
 Through the rooms, I see him there.
When I talk with others now,
 I can feel his finger-tips
On my arm, or on my brow
 Soft the touch of shadowy lips.
But the lips and hands are cold,
As the frost upon the wold.

I am haunted, and shall be
 Till death's slumber, deep and long,
Seals for all eternity
 Eyes to sight, and lips to song.
'Mong the lilies on my breast
 Will the ghost be laid, forgot,
When I lie in dreamless rest—
 When to me it matters not
If the year be dark and cold,
And the frost upon the wold.

THE CAVALIER.

TO J. G., THE JOURNALIST.

THE ivy-draped manor is clear to my mind,
With the dark waving tops of the woodland behind,—
Above it the blue, and around it the moat,
With the white, waxen cups of the lilies afloat,
And the door where I stood in the bright morning air,
With a blush on my cheek, and a rose in my hair,
And you leaned from your saddle to sigh at my ear,
In the velvet and plume of a gay cavalier.

Your steed was an Arab with nostril of fire,
A foot that was fleet as a lover's desire,
A skin satin-smooth and as sable as night,
A brilliant black eye rolling eager for flight,
A star in his forehead, a long silken mane,
A neck that was gallantly arched to the rein,
A proud swelling breast, and a sensitive ear—
Fit charger to carry a bold cavalier!

You were taller, I think, on that morning of old,
With the brown of your hair more inclining to gold.
But your face was the same—'twas as winning as now,
The same earnest look, and the same noble brow,

The frank, ready smile, and the clear, flashing eye,
Just the delicate hue of a soft summer sky ;
But a spirit undaunted and stranger to fear
Looked out of the eyes of the gay cavalier.

Black Selim was eagerly pawing the ground
Till the bells on his bridle sent up a sweet sound,
For the bugles they called him from hollow and hill,
To follow their melody silvery-shrill ;
So you gave him the rein and were off to the fray—
I flung you my rose as you galloped away ;
You caught it and kissed it, I saw with a tear ;
For my heart followed after the young cavalier.

The summer went by, and the roses were dead ;
The earth was of iron, the sky was of lead ;
The trees of the woodland were buried in snow,
When they told me you fell with your face to the foe :
For your home and your country a hero you died.
I heard it with joy and I heard it with pride,
Though I lived in my sorrow for many a year
A maid for the sake of the brave cavalier.

I dimly remember a night when they said
In the awe-stricken whisper of grief, "She is dead."
And my free soul exultantly burst from its bars,
And sought like an arrow the home of the stars,
Where it wandered in space, till one merry May morn
On the banks of the Hudson again it was born.

The rose was my playfellow, dainty and dear,
And I gave not a thought to the dead cavalier.

I had friends by the hundred and lovers a score,
But I turned from them all with a sigh evermore ;
For vain were their efforts to charm and to please,
For I said, " There are spirits more noble than these."
And at times in my dreams there was pictured to me
The moat and the manor, far over the sea,
With the steed at the door, and I listened to hear
The voice of my lover, the gay cavalier.

Then over the foam-crested ocean you came.
We met in the twilight : the moon's silver flame
Shone into your face, and I saw by its light
The patriot ready to die for the right,
With the heart of my hero of old in your breast,
To shelter the weak, and to aid the oppressed ;
A man for a tyrant to hate and to fear,
And a woman to worship—the true cavalier.

Red Mars is asleep and his weapons are sheathed,
His helmet with olive and myrtle is wreathed.
'Tis an era of peace ; so you carry the pen
In your charge on the demon-destroyers of men.
Like your javelin of old it is gallantly hurled
At the sins of the cities, the wrongs of the world
And lo ! as of old to my heart you are dear—
The hero, the poet, the true cavalier !

A ROSEBUD IMMORTAL.

WE stood in a garden at morning,
A garden all golden and green ;
The leaves in the wind sang together,
Her laughter made music between.
She was robed in the white of the lilies,
Her eyes, like the heavens, were blue,
And around her in sweetness unfolded
The roses, a-glitter with dew.

I prayed for a bud, and she gave it
With a smile and a blush and a sigh.
I caught and I kissed her white fingers ;
There trembled a tear in her eye.
Then the gardener, ancient and wrinkled,
Came clipping the boxwood and yew,
And she went, and a cloud drifted over,
And the sparkle died out of the dew.

My locks are a-glimmer with silver,
My life is unbrightened by love,
For, still in the robes of the lilies,
She sings with the angels above.

In a book in my bare little attic,
Laid in with a leaflet of rue,
Is a rosebud that never unfolded
For lack of the sunlight and dew.

That is all: she is dead like the rosebud,
And my love for her never was told;
But my dream of the glory of heaven
Is of her at the gateway of gold.
She stands with her feet in the blossoms,
And waiteth to welcome me through,
And give me a rosebud immortal,
Starred over with diamonds of dew.



THE ENCHANTRESS.

In a land beyond the ocean,
In the ages long ago,
Lived a lady like a lily,
With a breast and brow of snow.
From far countries kings and princes
To behold her beauty came,
And it pleased her that they loved her,
To whom love was but a name.

Gallant knights with plumes and pennons,
Pallid beggars at the door,
On whomever fell her glances,
They were lost forevermore ;
And they died of hopeless passion,
Or they lived her abject slaves.
So the air was full of sighing,
And the hill-top thick with graves.

But one day unto the gateway
Of her palace came a youth
With a length of golden ringlets,
And a face as fair as truth.
Not to pay her beauty homage
And to fall beneath its spell
Did he come, but he was weary,
So he rested by the well.

Riding forth that summer morning
With a merry cavalcade,
The enchantress saw him sleeping
By the fountain in the shade.
As she passed with tinkling harness
She looked down in sweet surprise,
And he lifted silken lashes
From his blue and starry eyes.

All that day with knights and maidens
Through the forest-arches dim

Rode she in a happy silence,
And a blissful dream of him ;
And at eve returning, eager
Leaning forward from her place,
Sought the gleam of golden tresses
At the crystal fountain's base.

But its waters sparkled coldly
In the moonbeams, chill and wan,
And a nightingale sang near it,
But the youth—the youth was gone !
Though upon his stony pillow
He had carved in letters deep,
“Love”—his name—and to her chamber
The enchantress passed to weep.

Never more beneath the eagles
O'er the gateways carven bold,
Rode she forth to pain or pleasure,
Rode she forth in heat or cold.
But she paced the narrow limits
Of her marble courts by day,
And upon a restless pillow
Wept the weary night away.

Travellers passing by the portal
Used to tell in after-years

Of a wan and white-haired woman
Wasted with a life of tears.
Aged crones would wisely whisper :
"Through the land her praises rung,
And men called her the enchantress,
In the days when we were young."

THE DEAD MAN'S CLOCK.

THE grass in the graveyard groweth green,
Deep and dank, with the dew upon it ;
The daisy trembles the stones between,
And the harebell nods in its purple bonnet ;
And out of the polished marble block,
Through sun or snow or the sound of thunder,
Night and morning, the ancient clock
Tells the time to the dead man under,
Quietly sleeping,
Silent and cold,
Down in the darkness,
Under the mold.

Once it stood in a mansion gray,
With mossy eaves and a rose-wreathed gable,
And merrily ticked the hours away
To the happy group at the laden table—

Lips of laughter and cheeks aglow,
Modest maidens in muslin dresses,
The stately sire with his locks of snow,
The rosy babe with its sunny tresses—
Shining silver
And gleaming gold,
All to be tarnished
Under the mold.

One of the maidens soon was wed—
Gay the guests at the bride's adorning.
One of the maidens soon was dead—
Hushed and heavy the house of mourning.
Odor of rue and of rosemary,
Gloom of pall, and pallor of lily—
How quiet a broken heart can be
Under the folded fingers chilly !
The shroud of satin
Serene and cold,
Made for the slumber
Under the mold.

The babe with the golden tresses grew
To manhood's might and to manhood's glory ;
Buried his father under the yew ;
Loved and wedded—the old sweet story ;—
Lived and died and was laid away
In the shimmering shade of the mournful willow,

To sleep and to sleep till the Judgment Day,
In a narrow bed on a dreamless pillow.
The prayer was uttered,
The bell was tolled,
And he was hidden
Under the mold.

The people wondered, the workmen laughed
As they set the chips from the chisel flying,
But the clock was set in the slender shaft,
For that was the wish of the master dying;
And whoever goes to his grave may see
The timepiece old in the marble column—
Time in the midst of eternity,
With finger pointing, steady and solemn,
To the dead man lying
Fast in the hold
Of Death the wizard,
Under the mold.

In the quaint old mansion its hands kept pace
With his joy and pride, with his sighs and sorrow,
And still it tells in his burial-place
Of the passing day and the coming morrow.
No need of lamps for his darkened eyes
Has he, nor clocks for the time that passes,
Down in the chamber where he lies,
Roofed above with the waving grasses.

Maids may marry,
And men grow old :
He sleeps unheeding
Under the mold.

But by-and-by in the hush of night
The starry gates of the sky will sever,
And a seraph shining in robes of white
Will stop the hands of the clock forever ;
Will stoop in the grasses and put them by,
Break the seal of the silent portal,
And unto the dust of the dead will cry,
“ Awake ! the dawn of the day immortal
Burns and brightens
And bursts, behold !
And rise from the darkness
Under the mold.”



THE LACE-MAKER.

DARK the sky with leaden clouds ;
In their soft and snowy shrouds
Stood the dead trees, stark and still ;
And the cottage walls were thin,
And the bitter wind crept in,
And the snow, across the sill.

"I am weary," Gertrude said,
"And the shelf is bare of bread.
I am weary, I am cold.
God, who hath forgotten me,
Housed the owlet in the tree,
Led the sheep into the fold."

So she put her needles by
With numb fingers, and a sigh,
When she heard a footstep fall
On the worn stone at the door,
On the rough, uneven floor,
Saw a shadow on the wall.

'Twas a woman, fair and young;
To her locks the snowflakes clung.
"Lady, hast thou lost thy way?"
But she lifted wondrous eyes,
Blue and clear as summer skies,
And she softly answered, "Nay."

Down she knelt at Gertrude's side
In her beauty and her pride,
Took the pillow in her hands,
By the candle's feeble light
Wove a scarf of filmy white
From the lace-thread's tangled strands.

Then—but still with silent lips—
Guided Gertrude's finger-tips
 Through the meshes to and fro,
Teaching her the way to weave
In her work the stars of eve,
 And the crystals of the snow.

When the stormy east was gray,
Then she rose and went away.
 Gertrude, gazing from the door,
Saw no footprint anywhere—
Spotless earth and silent air,
 And the white, unbroken moor.

Much she marvelled ; but she wrought
Even as the lady taught,
 And her fame went far and near,
Till she walked in velvet dressed,
With a gold cross on her breast,
 And with jewels at her ear.

Nevermore by hill or glen
Was the lady seen again,
 But she left the scarf behind.
Gertrude for her wedding-veil
Wore its woven lilies pale
 With the orange-blossoms twined.

When the snows of winter fell,
To her children she would tell
Of the lady and the lace,
Saying always at the close,
"Who she was no mortal knows,
But she had an angel's face."



CHRISTMAS AT INGLE FARM.

THE FLIGHT.

Go back with me to Christmas Eve
Full forty years ago :
The red roofs of the Ingle Farm
Rise up above the snow ;
Behind, the stately woodlands sing
A melancholy tune ;
Before, the white unbroken wold
Lies sparkling in the moon.

Upon the broad stone hearth within
A mighty yule-log roars,
And by its light his amber ale
The good old farmer pours.

But though he makes the rafters ring
With many an ancient tale,
His eye is still on Marion fixed—
Her cheek is all too pale.

She drops the wreath of mistletoe,
Half-woven, at his feet.
“Ah, father! I am weary now,
And sleep is very sweet.”
She loudly climbs the creaking stair,
But softly down again :
“Oh, why do all the timbers groan
Like souls in mortal pain?”

Ah! if for sleep she wearieth
When winds are keen and cold,
Why seeketh she the little gate
That opens on the wold?
And lo! when all the oxen kneel
At midnight in their stalls,
Yet still across her empty bed
The level moonbeam falls.

And looking through the frosted panes,
Although the moon is low,
One still may see no longer now
Unbroken lies the snow.

For footprints from the little gate
Ajar go leading down—
The footprints of a man and maid—
Together to the town.

THE RETURN.

Before the bitter blast that drives
The clouds and flying flakes,
And ushers in the Christmas Eve,
The ancient woodland shakes.
The birds among its branches seek
In vain a shelter warm,
And yet upon the starless waste
A woman braves the storm.

Just as she left it long ago
Wide open in her flight,
Its columns capped with snow, she finds
The little gate to-night.
Before the old familiar door
Knee-deep in drifts she stands,
And waits to hear the iron bolts
Withdrawn by friendly hands.

Nor does she wait in vain, for wide
The oaken door is flung.
“Forgive, forgive, forgive!” she kneels,
And cries with faltering tongue.

Against the yule-log's crimson glow
Her father's form appears.
She weeps: the snows upon the sill
Are melted by her tears.

And as she kneeleth suppliant there,
The chimes begin to play
Far off beyond the woodland white.
The storm has passed away,
And up across the snowy wold
And through the gate ajar,
The Christmas waits with melody
Come, lighted by a star.

"To-night the Prince of Peace is born,"
They sing, "and King of Heaven.
Oh, peace on earth, good-will to men,
Our sins are all forgiven!"
"Arise, my child," the father cries,
"Thy sorrows all are o'er.
Christ lived and died to teach us all
Forgiveness evermore."

With rose and gold and azure now
The Christmas Day is near,
And far and wide the silver bells
Are sounding sweet and clear.

And, hush! the message that they bring
From courts of heaven above,—
“The Christmas gifts of Christ,” they cry,
“Are mercy, peace, and love.”

THE CHIMES.

Stop thief!
The old year goes
O'er the drifted snows,
And the gray old year hath brought me grief.
He hath stolen the bud, and the dancing leaf,
And the dear little robin that used to sing
At my window-sill in the balmy spring,
And the rapturous kisses my lover gave.
He hath hidden him too in a narrow grave,
Deep down from the light of the broad blue sky.
And so through the rush of my tears I cry
Stop thief!

As the old year goes
O'er the drifted snows,
For the gray old year hath brought me grief.

All hail!
The new year comes
With a beat of drums,

The powdery snow was round it blown,
'Twas clad in Quaker gray,
And in the shadow of the stone
I watched it kneel and pray.
It might have been the maples tall
That groaned before the gale;
I heard it for a Bible call—
The voice of Nathan Hale.

It made my cheek with pity blanch,
And filled my soul with woe,
To see it take a broken branch
And write upon the snow
A letter to his love; and then
The wind came up the vale
And swept it white and smooth again.
Poor ghost of Nathan Hale!

'Tis true in winter sometimes comes
An earthquake underground;
To me it was the roll of drums,
The air was full of sound.
I heard them raise the gallows-tree,
And drive the coffin-nail,
And dig the grave that was to be
The grave of Nathan Hale.

The moon that moment cast aside
The clouds that veiled her face ;
Her light, and silence far and wide,
Enwrapped the lonely place.
But when the snows on Tappan fall,
And winds of winter wail,
I hear it for a Bible call—
The ghost of Nathan Hale.

THE SOUL

"I AM weary of life," said the rose,
As she leaned to look over the wall.
"I am tired of the garden close,
Of the birds and the bees and all."
She was plucked with a careless smile
As a beautiful dame went by,
To bloom on her breast awhile,
And be cast in the dust to die.

"I am tired of the tree," said the bird,
"Of the leaves in the wind and the rain,
Of the trills and the tunes I have heard
And warbled again and again."

He was shut from the sky and the star,
In a cage, like a savage thing,
And beating his breast on the bars
He died, with a broken wing.

"I would go to the war," said the boy;
"I am weary of clover in bloom;
In the rush of the battle is joy,
And I pant for a sabre and plume."
In the face of the foemen, he led—
To the wail of the wounded, the moan
Of the dying, and over the dead,
He mounted the steps of a throne.

For the soul is a thing that grows,
The soul is a deathless flame;
In the king, and the bird, and the rose,
It was ever the one and the same.
It was born of a beam of the sun;
From the heart of the blossom it passed
To the bird and the boy, where it won
The glory it pined for, at last.

MABEL CLARE.

If stars are in the quiet sky,
Or if the glass is blurred with rain,
With trembling lip and eager eye
Her face is pressed against the pane.
White lilies on her forehead blow,
The sun is tangled in her hair,
But as a broken mirror, so
The shattered mind of Mabel Clare.

Beneath the branches blossoming,
In coat and cap of velvet brown,
And singing gayly, in the spring
A handsome stranger came to town.
He found the ivy-shaded door,
And many an eve he lingered there.
He vowed to love for evermore,
And won the heart of Mabel Clare.

The trees about were touched with flame,
The skies above were dull and gray,
When, singing gayly as he came,
The handsome stranger rode away.
He left no word of hope behind,
But faith betrayed, and black despair,
A ruined life, a blighted mind,
A broken heart for Mabel Clare.

If wintry crescents glimmer cold,
Or stars of summer blaze and burn,
When evening dews are on the wold,
She watches still for his return.
She wears a rose at even-tide,
She binds a ribbon in her hair.
Ah ! all in vain your simple pride !
He will not see it, Mabel Clare.

But some time when the hour is late,
And when your weary eyes are dim,
A guest will enter at the gate
And bid you rise and follow him.
And you will leave your window-pane,
And find the fields forever fair,
Where broken hearts are healed again,
And minds are mended, Mabel Clare.



THE ROSEBUD FROM DOROTHY'S HAIR.

He dreamed of the fan in her fingers,
And worshipped her tiniest curl.
He was Robert, the son of the rector,
She was Dorothy, piece of the earl.

He came as she stood in the sunlight,
So fair and so cold and so sweet,
And lifted his heart as a goblet,
And poured out its wine at her feet.

She made to his folly no answer
Save looks of surprise and disdain,
But swept through the velvet-draped portal,
And left him alone in his pain.
He passed from her threshold forever,
And lo ! as he went on the stair,
He found a white, virginal rosebud
That Dorothy dropped from her hair.

From the roll and the roar of the cannon,
Where the waves of the battle ran high,
To the white-curtained bed of a cottage
They brought a young soldier to die.
Oh ! deep in his breast was the bullet,
But the hurt in his heart was more deep ;
And ever on Dorothy calling,
He fell, at the twilight, asleep.

Under the shade of the sacred
Dark cedar they laid him to rest.
A comrade in kneeling beside him
Discovered a flower on his breast.

It was soaked with his life's richest crimson ;
No longer of purity rare,
But scentless and dead : 'twas the rosebud
That Dorothy dropped from her hair !

Afar from the grave by the cedar,
While the snow-flakes were falling without,
A battle-scarred leader was telling
Of the fight, and the foe put to rout.
He spoke of the sweep of the sabres,
Of the rain of the pitiless lead,
And showed them the blood-brightened blossom
That he found on the breast of the dead.

The niece of the earl as she listened
Had lost all her delicate bloom,
And now she had fainted and fallen,
And they carried her out of the room.
The eyes of his hearers were misty,
And the heart of the flower was laid bare,
For it crumbled to dust in his fingers—
The rosebud from Dorothy's hair.

THE FLOWER OF FLAME.

At Lyndhurst of the tall white towers,
Was built a palace of the flowers,

That in the time of frost and snow
The children of the sun might blow.

And there, upon a winter's night,
A strange plant blossomed into light.

An elfin flower it was in truth ;
No human eye had watched its growth.

When all the world was still as death,
It broke its bonds and burst its sheath,

And climbed upon the crystal tower,
Unfolding in a gorgeous flower—

A running rose, with burning briars
And leaflets tipped with its own fires.

A living light shone from it, far
More bright than beam of moon or star.

On naked hill, and barren dell,
And leafless wood its glory fell,

And on the kingly Hudson's flood,
Red with a redness like to blood.

But soon this wonder that had made
The stars grow pale began to fade ;

Its crimson petals fell as fast
As leaves before an autumn blast.

Thus, ere the dawning of the day
It sprang to light and passed away.

And still we know not whence it came,
Nor whither went the flower of flame.



THE OLD CHURCH AT SLEEPY HOLLOW.

In the valley of Sleepy Hollow,
In the groves of elm and birch,
The old Dutch settlers builded
The walls of the ancient church.
They lie in its peaceful shadow,
But the bell that their labors hung
Still swings in the storm and sunshine,
A cracked and a mournful tongue.

It sets, in the sunlight streaming,
The dust from the rope afloat;
The cobwebs cling to the clapper,
The rust is thick in its throat.
But it rings, and it swings, and it clamors
In the hush of the Sabbath air,
Calling the folks in the village,
And the folks in the graves, to prayer.

Up from the town they loiter
Through the glimmer of leaves and light,
The men in their black coats slender,
The girls in their gowns of white.
And from under the head-stones slipping,
With an odor of must and mold,
In their Sunday dresses come trooping
The belles and the beaux of old.

'Tis a motley crowd goes over
The foot-hollowed threshold stone,
The quick and the dead together;
And I—I am not alone;
For a graceful gallant is with me,
The son of a wealthy squire,
With an opal ring on his finger
That gleams like an eye of fire.

And oh! the rustle of satins,
And the delicate faint perfume

Of linen, lavender-scented,
They bring with them from the tomb!
And the sombre shade of the preacher
As he prays in the pulpit high!
It is hard to believe them phantoms,
These folks of the years gone by!

We pass again to the glory
Of the golden afternoon;
There hangs in the hazy heavens
The ghost of a waning moon.
The girls in the muslin dresses
Go over the bridge to the town,
And the belles in the silks brocaded
Slip under the head-stones brown.

My gallant goes up to the hill-top,
And turns in the gathering mist
To kiss to me long, white fingers,
With ruffles of lace at the wrist.
The shape of his graceful shoulders
Sinks into a mound of green,
And I sigh for the still heart under,
With the door of the tomb between.

For some of us live too early,
And some of us live too late;
And if we had lived together,
Ah me! what a happy fate!

I weep and I find no comfort ;
For, ever both night and morn,
The eyes of a young man haunt me,
Who died ere I was born.

FROM LANDEN TO NEERWINDEN.

THE crimson cross of England shone,
The lilies white of France were blown,
The battle-steeds were given rein,
Was heard the trumpet's wild refrain
From Landen to Neerwinden.

The polished swords flashed out and crossed,
The field of blood was won and lost,
And through the twilight's silver veil
The victor-lilies glimmered pale,
From Landen to Neerwinden.

Breast-high were piled the corpses there ;
From dusk till dawn the heated air
(Although no bell was heard to toll)
Was thick with many a passing soul
From Landen to Neerwinden.

For twelve long months the slain at rest
Lay underneath the earth unblest,
And then the blood from every heart
From out the dust began to start,
From Landen to Neerwinden.

For there began from friend and foe
A million scarlet flowers to grow,
And every flower a poppy red,
Until a gorgeous garden spread
From Landen to Neerwinden.



THE ROBIN'S RAIN-SONG.

THERE are silver pools in the garden walks,
And diamond drops in the bower,
As the young green leaves and the withered stalks
Are bathed in the crystal shower.
At the purple plumes of the lilac-spray
I gaze through a jewelled pane,
Where a robin sitteth the livelong day
And singeth a song of rain.

To the farmer driving his oxen by
He sings of the harvest yield,
Of the corn and the wheat and the haystack high,
And the cows in the daisied field.

But to me who look through a mist of tears,
A sad and a sweet refrain
Set to the tune of the bygone years
Is the robin's song in the rain.

For the gate is oped in the twilight hush,
And a fair little maid comes through,
And stops to hear by the lilac-bush,
Just as I used to do.

I see the gleam of the golden hair,
And the neck in its slender chain,
And the dainty skirt that she lifts with care
From the long grass wet with the rain.

The gate long since to the flame was fed,
And the lilac-bush has grown,
And the little maid is as dead, as dead,
As if under a churchyard stone.
For here in her place is a woman old
Who thinks that she sees again
The rosy face and the locks of gold,
When the robin sings in the rain.

AT THE GOLDEN DRAGON.

WHITE with the dust of travel
As his horse was white with foam,
Once on a time the stranger
Joyfully hailed it home.
But now its guests have departed,
And its glory is no more,
And the golden dragon is tarnished
On the sign-board over the door.

Elsie sat in its shadow
When the gilded sign was new ;
The sun was bright on the blossoms,
The birds were up in the blue.
She saw, from the winding highway
Turn to the door of the inn,
A youth as fair as Apollo—
A youth with a violin.

The dew from the branches shaken
Was bright on his golden hair ;
His cap was feathered and jewelled,
Like those that the nobles wear.

And as Elsie timidly served him—
For she was a maiden shy—
She marked through her silken lashes
The blue of his laughing eye.

Up on the oaken wainscot
The carved Cupids smiled,
As he from her lips of roses
A nectarous kiss beguiled.
But they lifted their wings for rapture,
And wept for sorrow and sin,
When he wakened the wounded spirit
That dwelt in the violin.

But lo! when the star of twilight
Shone through a silver haze,
And hearths were lighted, he vanished
Into the dim wood-ways.
He left in her ear a promise
Of a glad return some day,
When birds in the branches builded,
And the hawthorn budded in May.

Woe for the maiden watching
The buds on the hawthorn tree!
Shame on the fickle wooer!
For never again came he.

Snow lay deep on the meadows,
Blossoms smothered the inn,
Weary she grew with waiting
The sound of the violin.

Turning with tears from her suitors,
She sat in her room alone ;
Woke in the long night-watches,
And thought of a churchyard stone ;
'Till each of the months in passing
Braided a silver thread
Into her raven tresses,
And the hawthorn tree was dead.

Like a leaf left over from autumn,
Soberly clad in brown,
It chanced in a festal season
She went to the far-off town,
And saw in the Emperor's carriage
The youth who came to the inn,
In the time of lilies and roses,
And played on the violin.

Hope, like the hawthorn, withered,
For it is a bitter thing
To lay the love of a lifetime
Down at the feet of a king !

For he has the love of many,
And soon does his own grow cold ;
What though his brow is beauty,
And the curls of his hair are gold !

Home through the wintry even
She went with a footstep slow,
Fell ere she reached the threshold,
And died in a drift of snow.
Dust in the earth is Elsie,
But the walls of the ancient inn
Echo forever at midnight
The wail of a violin.



LOVE'S HOUR.

TO C. T. P., OF MAYSVILLE, KY.

O YOUTH with the fire of the south in your veins,
At the gateway of roses dismount in the dew,
While the stag in the forest unhunted remains,
For a red-lipped enchantress is waiting for you.
She weareth a girdle of blue at her waist
Where she stands, with the sweet slender lilies at play.
Go ! hasten the dew of her kisses to taste ;
You can follow the chase when your ringlets are gray,

For the glory of youth fadeth quickly,
Old age cometh after;
There is more of the storm than the sunshine,
Of tears than of laughter.

Let her arms in their whiteness be laid to your neck,
And her cheek in its fairness be pressed to your own;
The future may bring you but tempest and wreck,
We can claim but the joy of the present alone.
So let others away to the sport of the chase,
And the sound of the horn in the haunts of the deer;
There is nothing so sweet as a woman's embrace,
Save a woman's low voice sighing love at your ear.
For the glory of youth it declineth;
Old age cometh after;
So seize ye love's hour as it flieth,
With kisses and laughter.

THE CLOUDLETS.

Two rosy cloudlets met and kissed
In eastern sky of amethyst,
And that was all to mortal view;
For how could human eyes behold
The wings that changed from white to gold,
As on they drifted up the blue?

A laborer in the fields below
Looked up and saw them—could he know
That they were souls but just forgiven—
True lovers' souls, that side by side
Went floating up the crystal tide
Of ether, to the gates of Heaven?

DECORATION DAY.

HERE are the gates of the graveyard—
Go in with a reverent tread—
Where lie in an endless treaty
The ranks of the soldier dead.
We meet with never a challenge,
And we need no countersign,
For silently still they slumber,
The sons of the palm and the pine.

Down where the tangled grasses
Meet over them, strung with dew,
Are two green graves in the shadow,
Of beautiful youths and true.
See! on the one a daisy
Opens its silvery tips;
And a sweet, red rose to the other
Is pressing its crimson lips.

There's gold in the heart of the daisy,
For its roots are twined in the gold
Of the curls of the boy from Auburn
Who lieth under the mold;
There's warmth in the passionate kisses
Of the rose's velvet mouth,
For its blood is drawn from the bosom
Of the dark-eyed youth from the South.

In the green savannahs of Georgia
Yearneth a woman gray,
For him who under the rose-tree
Sleepeth the years away.
And far in the North a mother,
Whom sorrow hath made divine,
For the boy with the golden tresses
Sits sighing under the pine.

If here at these graves together
Those mothers should meet to-day,
Each in tears for her darling,
What would they do and say?
Knelt in the deep, wet grasses
By the grave of an only son,
Would they remember the conflict,
Or the cause that was lost and won?

They would speak of the childish prattle,
Of the boys in the days afar,

Of the dawn of their manly beauty,
And the day that they went to the war;
And the rush of their tears would mingle
Like the drops of an April rain—
The tears of the mother from Georgia
With the tears of the mother from Maine.

And so, for the sake of the women
Who mourn by a lonely hearth,
Let us ask not the flag of the soldier
Lying hushed in the bosom of earth;
For the angel on guard at the portal,
When they come to the City of Light,
To the blue and the gray crieth, "Enter!
If the robes of thy spirit are white."

And so we will make them a garland
For the time and the day and the place,
Of the dark tree that sigheth forever,
And the tall tree symbolic of grace;
With slender white lilies and roses,
Dewy-hearted and redder than wine,
For the two shadowed graves we will make it,
The wreath of the palm and the pine.

INDEPENDENCE DAY.

With buckled shoes and powdered hair,
And stately staff in hand,
Come sun or shadow, once a year
He walks his native land.
When every house along the street
With silken flags is gay,
And cannons usher in the dawn
Of Independence Day.

When forth at early morn I go
To see my lilies tall,
With courtly grace he bows to me
Across the garden wall.
The laces at his wrist—the webs,
With dewdrops all a-shine,
The spiders spin from rose to rose,
They are not half so fine !

When brightly burns the sultry noon
Along the village street,
He passes through the noisy crowd
On swift and silent feet.

And later, if I seek the wood
The crystal spring to quaff,
I find him there in earnest prayer,
Or leaning on his staff.

In some old churchyard where they ceased
To bury long ago,
Where, through the twilight, glimmer pale
The head-stones in a row,
And from the hill the whip-poor-will
Cries out beneath the scourge,
He kneels beside the soldier's grave
Who died at Valley Forge.

But when at night the rockets leap,
To write the glorious name
Of Liberty upon the gates
Of heaven, in rainbow flame,
His face looks down between the stars
That light his blest abode ;
For know ye he is Washington,
And dwelleth there with God.

Beside the blue Potomac's wave
You say his ashes lie ;
Yet he returneth once a year,
For he can never die.

When in the rosy flush of dawn
The starry flags unroll,
From street and square and everywhere
The cannons call his soul.

He hears afar in Paradise,
For he remembers still
The grinding ice of Delaware,
The drums at Bunker Hill,
And leaves the splendor of the skies
Until the evening gray,
To walk with us and talk with us
On Independence Day.



ALL IN THE OLDEN TIME.

THE sunshine lay on meadow and croft,
And the lark was singing his matins aloft
In a mellow and musical chime,
As I walked by the side
Of a fair young bride.
The wedding-bells rang, oh! so sweet,
And bright were the flowers beneath our feet,
All in the olden time.

On blade and leaflet the dew had dried,
The flowers of the bridal morn had died,
The bells had ceased to chime.
I heard from the oak
The ravens croak,
And I saw the black clouds, one by one,
Roll up and smother the golden sun,
All in the olden time.

The night was dark, for the moon was dead.
I heard in the shadows a sound of dread,
A death-bell's desolate chime,
As I crouched in the gloom
By an open tomb.
My bride in a shroud within it lay,
My beautiful bride who was once so gay—
All in the olden time.



GOLDEN-ROD.

"THE way is long," the lost boy said.
The stars were shining overhead ;
The silence of the deep, black woods,
Their dim and death-like solitudes,

And unseen dangers, round him lay ;
Great shadows rose and barred the way.
Afraid to pass, he paused and wept,
Lay down upon the moss and slept.

In dreams a mother soothed his fears ;
The night-dews mingled with his tears,
And like forgotten sunbeams there,
About him strayed his golden hair.
A snake beneath his outstretched arm
Slipped by, nor sought to do him harm.
At midnight, when the winds were wild,
An angel came and found the child.

The woods were blighted by the frost,
Dead leaves above the dead were tossed ;
Came Winter on a flying cloud,
And clad him in a snowy shroud ;
And Spring, a maid from holy lands,
Put purple violets in his hands ;
And Summer sent her birds to sing
Where his still heart lay mouldering.

The sun, the snow, the wind, the rain,
Resolved him back to dust again ;
Till Autumn, in the wilderness,
Found nothing but a silken tress.

She wound it on a slender rod,
And set it in the withered sod,
And so the lost boy's golden locks
Make glory on the lichened rocks.



THE ROBIN.

WHEN a little maid, I listened
In the gloaming, ere the prayer,
To a tender story told me
By a dame with silver hair,
All about a faithful robin
With a brave and ruddy breast,
And a tempest in the midnight,
And a dead bird on the nest.

In a bower of apple-blossoms,
Pink and white and honey-sweet,
Built the birds a dainty dwelling,
Shadowed from the summer heat.
Flirt and flutter, chirp and chirrup,
As the fairy homestead grew,
Then a song of wildest rapture
Over eggs of palest blue.

But a gloom fell on the orchard
And the nest among the flowers ;
Rose the wind and rocked the branches,
Fell the rain in icy showers,
Broke the day in cloudless splendor—
Ships had foundered far at sea,
But the robin's fragile treasures
Safely swung upon the tree.

Pouring out his heart in music,
On a bruised and broken spray,
Sat the robin, singing ever
To his mate the livelong day.
She was strangely cold and silent ;
Not a feather on her breast
Stirred to all his strains of sweetness—
She was dead upon the nest !

Many a morn he hovered near her ;
But at last he ceased to sing,
Eying her with mournful glances
And a sadly drooping wing.
Thus a random bullet found him
In the bower of rosy bloom,
And the children, weeping softly,
Fashioned him a tiny tomb.

Since the story in the twilight
Made the tears of pity roll,

Years have flown, but still I hold me
That the robin had a soul—
That amid the boundless beauty
Of the meadows of the blest
I shall sometimes hear him singing
To his mate upon the nest!

DOROTHY GRAY.

THERE'S a dull, leaden sky for Thanksgiving,
And a coating of snow on the lawn,
But the firelight within is a flicker,
And the soft crimson curtains are drawn.
I gaze in the glow of the embers,
From the depths of a low easy-chair,
Seeing pictures than Rembrandt or Rubens,
The old Flemish masters, more rare.

Overhead I can hear the gay laughter
And the low silver tones of the girls,
With their white slender fingers bejewelled,
With their eyes and their dimples and curls.
They are choosing the dresses for dinner,
'Twixt satin and velvet at loss,
While below the French cook is preparing
The turkey and salad and sauce.

But lo! as the fire burneth higher,
A witch cometh out of the flame,
And the walls of my purple-hung palace
Fade away at a touch from the dame.
Gone, gone are my locks, thin and hoary,
With the wrinkles of threescore and ten,
And away in an amethyst valley
I see the old homestead again.

In the black-raftered kitchen together
We meet at a bountiful board;
And bowing his care-silvered tresses,
My father gives thanks to the Lord.
My mother beams mildly upon us,
A saint by the love in her eyes:
And a sorceress, too, you would swear it,
If you ever had tasted her pies!

And there is another yet dearer—
My cousin, sweet Dorothy Gray.
Her lips are like roses and honey,
Her eyes are as frank as the day.
We will wed when the winter is over—
But stay! I am dreaming: she died,
And they shrouded the slender white figure
In the dress that was made for a bride.

Afar in the amethyst valley
There is darkness and silence to-night;

Cold, cold is the hearthstone forever,
And cold are the graves on the height.
But I turn from the riches around me,
And sigh for an hour of the joy
That came with the golden Thanksgiving
To the free, happy heart of the boy.

I would give all my flagons of silver,
And the wines that *bon-vivants* adore,
For a sip of the nectarous cider
That we drank at the homestead of yore.
I would give all my gallery of masters
For a glimpse of the chimney ablaze
Where we gathered at twilight and whispered
Such stories of phantoms and fays.

But here are my beautiful daughters
In a shimmer of satin and pearl :
Alicia will marry a banker,
Louise is betrothed to an earl.
But ever between them I fancy
That I see in a curious way,
In her simple merino and kerchief,
The figure of Dorothy Gray.

So to-night when I render thanksgiving
With my fair lady-wife at my side,
Think not I am grateful for riches,
For lo ! in my splendor and pride,

My heart goeth back in the prayer,
To a maiden long mouldered away,
Thanking God for the best of my blessings,
The memory of Dorothy Gray.



THE ROOKS.

It was in the spring he met her,
When the park was green with leaves;
When the mated thrushes builded,
Singing in the rainy eves;
And the rich wistaria budded;
And about the quaint old hall
Flocked the rooks, those ancient tenants,
In the windy tree-tops tall.

All his poems he read unto her
'Neath the blue of smiling skies,
And the deer between the palings
Looked with wonder in their eyes.
Then he spoke of love and taught her
All the magic in it hid,
While the swans, with necks entwining,
Through the lilies slowly slid.

Later, "Love, my love," he murmured,
"In the crystal of thine eye
Heaven and earth for me are mirrored,
Yet I come to say good-bye.
Now behold! the lusty summer
Puts her sickle in the grain;
Ere the golden sheaves are garnered,
Surely I will come again."

Gone away were all the thrushes,
And the woody park was bare,
And the fire was in the stubble,
And the frost was in the air.
From her bed she watched the sunsets
Flare and fade along the wall;
Heard the rooks of evil croaking
In the windy tree-tops tall.

Noon and night upon her pillows
Waiting evermore she lay,
To the blank white wall beside her
Turning still her face away.
He had left her when the roses
Filled their hearts with dewy wine,
And in all the weeks that followed
Sent her neither word nor line.

But at times an idle rumor
To the hall came floating down;

Fame had crowned him with her laurels,
Said the babble of the town.
He had sung a song of wonder
Of a woman, white and slim,
Dwelling in among the lilies,
And who died for love of him.

Yes, she died between the darkness
And the glimmer of the dawn,
And the white and ghostly curtain
O'er her window-pane is drawn.
"She is dead—is dead," the rain-drops
Murmur in their dreary fall;
"She is dead," the rooks are calling
In the windy tree-tops tall

THE POET'S LILIES.

'Twas in the full of summer
That Marguerite was born,
And Marguerite was twenty
Upon the morrow morn.
"No pearl beneath the waters,
No rose upon the tree,"
Said Percival the poet,
"Is half so fair as she."

"She's like the lilies slender,
She's like the lilies sweet.
I'll take a sheaf of lilies
And lay it at her feet.
I would I were the blossoms
To be so greatly blest,
For she will take them, smiling,
And wear them on her breast."

"Now, nay," with scornful laughter,
The gay Sir Francis cried,
"A necklace of red rubies
Will better suit her pride,
In beaten gold embedded
On her white neck to burn.
Oh! sweet will be the kisses
She'll give me in return."

Last spoke the soldier Harold:
"No lilies on the spray,
Nor jewels, will I give her
To please her but a day.
But when from dewy slumber
The larks begin to start,
I'll seek her 'mid the roses
And give to her my heart."

When from the wooded valleys
The morning mist uprolled,

The lovers sought together
Her bowers of green and gold.
They found no fairy figure
In all the garden through,
But wild bees black and yellow,
And roses drowned in dew.

“ Oh ! why is all the garden
And all the house so still,
And why this sprig of rosemary
Upon the broad stone sill,
And why this darkened chamber,
With tapers in a row
Around a maiden sleeping
Upon a couch of snow ? ”

Like two white roses folded
The hands of Marguerite,
And stainless as a snowdrift
The straight and silken sheet.
They stood in silent sorrow,
They stood with bated breath,
For on a sudden knew they
How beautiful is death.

That neck so white—the rubies
Profanely there would shine.
The soldier's heart, though gallant,
Was stained with blood and wine,

And to its pulse of passion
Her own would never stir.
So not a gift among them
Was good enough for her—

None save the poet's lilies,
Clear-stemmed, divinely fair,
The souls of sinless maidens,
The flowers the angels wear.
He laid them on her bosom ;
I heard him softly say :
"Sweet Marguerite in heaven
Is born again to-day."

A FADED FLOWER.

THE firelight on the window-pane
Made jewels of the winter rain,
And like a goblin dancer tall,
Bowed to the portraits on the wall.
A favorite book upon my knees,
I rested, read, and took my ease,
Nor heard the bitter winds that beat
The hapless wanderer on the street.

I turned the leaves with motion slow :
It was a tale of love and woe.

I heard the clocks clang out the hour.
And what was this ? a faded flower,
A spray of withered heliotrope,
That once upon a sunny slope
Of verdure in a garden grew,
Amid the roses and the dew.

Then came a miracle : my eyes
Beheld the flattened flow'ret rise
To pristine beauty, fresh and fair.
A subtle fragrance filled the air,
And every tiny flower once more
Took on the purple hue it wore
When first that summer morn it bloomed,
And every passing breeze perfumed.

Like vapors in the sun of May
Faded my curtained walls away,
And round me came that garden old,
The glory of its green and gold
That framed her round—the sweetest maid
That ever stood in white arrayed,
The fairest flower of all that grew
Among the roses and the dew !

I heard her accents soft and low,
I saw her slender hand of snow
(The hand for which I dared to hope)
Fasten the purple heliotrope

Above my heart—its nerves of steel
Trembled, her gentle touch to feel.
I kissed her—how could lips so red
Let fall the lying words she said ?

A log fell in the fire, and then
Returned my curtained walls again.
The book upon my knees still lay
With ruffled leaves, the withered spray
Of heliotrope was in my hand—
All left me of that fairy land.
False was the lovely maid I knew,
And dead the roses, dried the dew.

But hark ! the wailing wind alone
Could never give that human moan !
And what was that ? a woman's face
Pressed to the window's jewelled space !
I threw it wide and drew her in.
“ If thou art sad with want or sin,
Rest thee beside the fire, nor fear
To pour thy sorrows in my ear.”

Back from her pallid face she flung
The long bright locks that o'er it hung,
And then she bowed her head and wept,
And then toward the table stept,
Where lay, upon the open book,
The heliotrope. With mournful look

She said : " Dost thou remember, too,
The roses blowing in the dew ?

" Fair is the flatterer's face, but mark,
Ye silly maids ! his soul is dark.
And sweet, indeed, the honeyed song
That leads a hapless maiden wrong.
I only came to see again
The noblest of all noble men.
I ask no pity, though forlorn ;
I merit but your hate and scorn."

Her drooping figure turned away.
I touched her hand, and murmured, " Stay."
I drew her to my sheltering breast :
" Here find forevermore thy rest.
I loved the lily long ago ;
What if a rude hand soiled its snow ?
'Tis yet the same sweet flower I knew
Among the roses and the dew."

THE SONG OF A STAR.

OVER the lanes of the country,
And over the streets of the town,
The night, with its pain or its pleasure
To hovel or palace, came down,
And a star in its ebony tresses

Through a window resplendently shone,
In the dark little room of an attic,
Where a poet sat watching alone.

The candle was low in the socket,
The hearthstone was fireless and gray,
And a packet of poems rejected
On the floor at the feet of him lay.
He thought of his dream of ambition
That was dust with the dead evermore,
And he heard in the cold and the silence
The growl of the wolf at the door.

The window was grimy and broken,
But the beam of the star through it stole
And went with its radiant glory
To the depths of his sorrowful soul.
And so with a bit of a pencil,
As the candle went out at his side,
He wrote, on his last scrap of paper,
A song of the star ere he died.

His grave in the city of slumber
Has a laurel hung over the stone,
For the words that he wrote in an attic
In castle and cottage are known.
But from where he is happy in heaven,
With God and the angels afar,
Does he smile or he frown when we praise it,
His beautiful song of a star?

THE NIGHTINGALE.

THE lady from her lofty tower
Looked out upon the dusk :
Her raven braids were bound with pearls,
Her garments sweet with musk.
She longed to hear her gallant's step,
To see his waving plume,
To feel his kiss upon her cheek
Bring back its ready bloom.

But all night long she only heard
The fountain's flow and fall;
The garden's perfume sickened her,
Like flowers upon a pall :
And ever from the wood beyond,
A joyous nightingale
Poured out his happy heart in song,
Until the stars were pale.

The mists and moisture fled away,
And then the fiery drouth,
With scorching breath and blazing wing,
Descended from the South.
The earth was parched for want of rain,
The flowers for lack of dew,
And still the lonely lady watched
The sultry even through.

About her casement drooped the vines,
The sill was hot to feel,
And from the purple sky the stars
Flamed out like burning steel.
But to the fount the nightingale
Came down and drank his fill,
And made the dusky wood till dawn
With magic music thrill.

The lilies closed their petals up
And made themselves a shroud,
A week before the silver rain
Dropped softly from a cloud.
It cooled the air, and healed the flowers,
And filled the stagnant well,
While on the lady's long black locks
Her lover's kisses fell.

The cloud went by, the moon arose,
The fountain was a flood.
The bird that stole Apollo's flute
Was silent in the wood.
Upon the rain-bespangled moss
He lay, with dripping crest.
The flute was broken in his throat,
The arrow in his breast.

Ah! never does the golden sun
Of morning wake the lark,

But somewhere else the gloomy shades
Of twilight turn to dark.
And never for the honored guest
The banquet board is spread,
But in the dreary night without
Another cries for bread.

This is the moral of my song,
And he that runs may read :
The joy that comes to us may make
Some other bosom bleed.
The lover to the lady came,
But crossed the woody vale
Upon the way, and drew his bow,
And shot the nightingale.



THE WHITE BIRD OF MERIVALE.

THE rainy skies were dark and chill,
The winds were sharp to cheek and chin,
When o'er the wild and stormy kill
A strange white bird came sailing in,
O'er shifting sand and silver sail,
Into the town of Merivale,
The seaport town of Merivale.

The rough and bearded sailor men
Looked up, and one and all averred
That never yet in field or fen
Had they beheld so strange a bird
As that blown in before the gale
Upon the town of Merivale,
The ancient town of Merivale.

One cottage in the silent street
An air of sorrow brooded o'er;
For there a child with naked feet
Strewed rosemary before the door.
For so they do when death lies pale
Within a house at Merivale,
The quaint old town of Merivale.

She said an hour before she died:
"Oh, mother! come ye here, I pray,
For nevermore I'll watch the tide,
Nor feel again the sweet, salt spray,
Nor hear the mermen hoarsely hail
The fisher-folk in Merivale,
About their fires in Merivale."

"But when I sleep, no more to wake,
And ye can say, 'She died for love,'
Yet still no rest my soul shall take,
In earth below or heaven above,

Till my false lover's corse shall trail
An inky pall in Merivale,
A dead man's pall in Merivale."

He heard her knell without a sigh,
For grief had never touched his heart.
He laughed to see her bier go by,
For death and he were far apart.
But soon his ruddy cheek grew pale,
The fisher-boy of Merivale,
The black-eyed boy of Merivale.

"Oh! if I steer my boat from land,
The haunting bird above me flies;
Or if I sit, or if I stand,
It looketh at me with her eyes,
Who sleepeth by the chancel-rail
Within the kirk at Merivale,
The ivied kirk at Merivale.

"Why should her soul with me be wroth?
For other youths might come to woo,
And men before have broken troth
With maids as good, with maids as true;
But hark! I hear the waters wail
Along the coast of Merivale,
The low, dark coast of Merivale."

He sank below the ceaseless whirl,
The demon-dance of wind and wave;
But in its sepulchres of pearl
The sea refused the dead a grave,
And cast it up to tell the tale
Upon the sand at Merivale,
The wet gray sand at Merivale.

All dark and dripping from the deep
The silken curls about his head,
When, some to wonder, some to weep,
The folks came down to view the dead.
And there they watched it seaward sail
Forevermore from Merivale,
The strange white bird of Merivale.



THE KNIGHT IN SILVER MAIL

SHE left the needle in the rose
And put her broidery by,
And leaning from her casement tall
She heard the owlets cry.
The purple sky was thick with stars,
And in the moonlight pale
She saw come riding from the wood
A knight in silver mail.

His plume was like the snowy foam
That wreathes the roaring tide ;
The glory of his golden locks
His helmet could not hide.
She took the lily from her breast
(Like hers its beauty frail)
And dropped it as he rode beneath,
The knight in silver mail.

About her gown of crimson silk
She drew a mantle dark.
She saw the stately castle-towers
Uprising from the park,
And on the lake the mated swans
Asleep in shadow sail,
But left it all to follow him,
The knight in silver mail.

“ Oh ! I would see thy face, my love,
Oh ! I would see thy face.
Why dost thou keep thy visor down ?
It is a lonely place.”
His voice was like the hollow reeds
That whistle in the gale :
“ ’Tis lonelier in my castle,” said
The knight in silver mail.

He let his steed go riderless,
He took her by the hand,

And led her over brake and brier
Into a lonesome land.

"Oh! are they head-stones all a-row
That glimmer in the vale?"

"My castle-walls are white," replied
The knight in silver mail.

"So close unto thy castle-doors
Why buriest thou the dead?"

"For ten long years I've slept with them;
Now welcome home," he said.

He clasped her dainty waist around,
And in the moonlight pale

Upraised the visor, and she saw
The knight in silver mail.

At dawn her father's men-at-arms
Went searching everywhere,

And found her with the churchyard dews
A-sparkle in her hair;

And lo! a sight to make the best
And bravest of them quail—

Beside her in the tangled grass
A skeleton in mail.

HER CHOICE.

Two letters lay beside her plate
That dull December morning :
One creamy-tinted, thick, and fine,
A silver crest adorning;
And one in plain and common white,
Untinted and uncrested.
Each brought a heart, and so untouched
Her dainty breakfast rested.

One spoke in cold and courtly phrase
Of wealth, ancestral honor,
And pride, but with the name and gold
She needs must take the donor.
And one impassioned breathed to her
Of flowery garden closes,
A quaint white cottage by the sea,
And love among the roses.

Before her in a vision passed
The young earl's haughty features,
His scorn of all less great than he,
And all earth's toiling creatures.
Then Robert's sunny smile, and eyes
So dark and deep and tender,
His swinging step and ringing voice,
And figure straight and slender.

The letter with the silver crest
Proud dreams ambitious brought her,
Of stately halls, and swelling fields,
And lakes of liliated water.
But Cupid murmured at her ear
"Thy maiden heart reposes
Where stands a cottage by the sea,
O'errun with crimson roses."

She saw herself in silken robes,
In costly jewels blazing,
The queen of dinner, ball, and hunt,
All eyes upon her gazing.
She saw herself in quiet gowns,
That ill displayed her beauty,
Her home a prison, and her life
A rigid round of duty.

And so she penned two pretty notes :
One said, such honor paid he
To her, she could not choose but say
That she would be his lady !
And one, some other maid than she
Must tend the garden closes,
And round the cottage by the sea
Entwine the running roses.

She is "my lady" now, and leads
In folly and in fashion ;

A lovely figure dressed by Worth,
A heart devoid of passion.
She is the belle of every ball,
The beauty of the races,
And everywhere her face is still
The fairest of all faces.

But who can tell the silver cloud
May have a leaden lining ?
And who can read a woman's heart,
Its hidden pain and pining ?
For sometimes in my lady's dreams
The gate of heaven uncloses
Upon a cottage by the sea,
And love among the roses.



PSYCHE.

ONWARD to the ocean flowing
Goes the river with a song,
Stately trees beside it growing,
Tall reeds on its banks a-blowing,
In the sunshine, all day long.
Psyche sits beside the river,
Braiding roses in her hair ;

Hidden in the reeds that quiver,
With a flute
That yet is mute,
Stands a youth divinely fair.

Lightly up the blue skies drifting,
Floats a cloudlet pale with heat ;
Through the boughs, above her sifting,
Fall the restless shadows, shifting,
At her small and sandalled feet.
Psyche ceases, by the river,
To braid roses in her hair,
Where the reeds sway all a-quiver :
On the flute,
No longer mute,
Plays the youth divinely fair.

Sea-shells from their chambers shining,
Breathing ocean's melody ;
Birds in song 'midst blossoms twining,
Then a burst of wild repining,
And a lover's tender plea.
Psyche, sitting by the river,
With red roses in her hair,
In the reeds that bend and quiver,
Hears the flute
That is not mute,
Sees the youth divinely fair.

Falls a hush, with echoes dying
Far across the distant plain ;
Green leaves in the wind are sighing,
And the silver-footed, flying
River-waves are heard again.
Psyche blushes by the river
Like the roses in her hair :
From the reeds yet all a-quiver,
With the flute
That now is mute,
Looks the youth divinely fair.

In a blaze of color splendid—
Rose and gold and violet—
Like the garden, rainbow-blended,
Lovely Proserpina tended,
See the sun in glory set.
Psyche sits beside the river,
With the roses in her hair ;
To her, through the reeds a-quiver,
With his flute,
That still is mute,
Comes the youth divinely fair.

THE GREEN BUSH.

It grew in a quiet corner
Close by the garden wall,
And drank the dew and sunlight,
A green bush, fair and tall.
Red roses blossomed round it,
And lilies white and cool,
And morning-glories, dancing
Like children just from school.

New sprays and leaflets daily
It reached toward the sky,
And yet it bore no blossom
For bee or butterfly.
So in the dewy morning
I sought the garden-bed
And broke the thrifty branches :
"It is a weed," I said.

And lo ! it seemed the portals
Of Paradise were wide,
With all the incense streaming
From bowers of bloom inside.
For scent of myrrh and sandal,
And musk and all things sweet,
Rose from the tender foliage
I bruised beneath my feet.

And as the green bush dying
Its fragrant soul revealed,
So oft in quiet bosoms
Sweet spirits long are sealed.
We pass them by with laughter,
With jest and haughty air,
For flaunting human roses
That blossom everywhere.

But when affliction bruises
The object of our scorn,
Too late we catch the perfume
On heavenly breezes borne,
And know the plant was precious
We trampled in the sod,
When it binds the brows of angels
Within the gates of God.



THE BONBONNIÈRE.

'Twas gilded wicker-work, entwined
With rosy ribbons bright and neat,
With softest silken tissue lined,
And filled with many a dainty sweet—

Pink, sparkling roses, melting hearts,
And sugared violets, rich and rare ;
But Cupid, with his rings and darts,
Oft hides within a *bonbonnière* !

With shining eyes and sunny curls,
And mouth a red pomegranate cleft,
Young Rose, the loveliest of girls,
Bent down above the pretty gift.
And lo ! a perfumed note she found,
On creamy paper, smooth and fair,
And with a true-blue ribbon bound,
Within the gold *bonbonnière* !

"Sweet Rose," it ran, "though many a sweet
I send you, yet you are to me"
(And here her heart began to beat)
"More sweet than any sweet can be.
Oh, learn this lesson in love-lore :
I love your eyes, your lips, your hair ;
Let me provide forevermore
The sweets for your *bonbonnière* !"

DEAD IN DAKOTA.

THE monster of Death came rushing
From the crystal deeps of the air,
And one of his wings was Terror,
And the other was named Despair ;
His breath was the wind that blighted
The dead worlds long ago,
And his blind and terrible features
Were hid in a veil of snow.

The earth and the sky together
Were flung in the tumult drear,
And the demons of cold and of darkness
Were loose in the atmosphere.
But they stopped in their mad commotion,
And the wild winds ceased to blow
For the space of a single second,
When my lover died in the snow.

Full many a league to eastward,
In the land of the rising sun,
With folded hands by the fire
I sat, for my work was done ;
And I heard the sound of the sleigh-bells
As I heard them long ago,
When he came and he went forever,
In the moonlight, over the snow.

I saw in the dusk before me
His tall young form, and the grace
Of his head with its fair blond tresses,
And the love in his handsome face.
It was then that his soul, departing,
Beheld ere it passed, I know,
My face in a ghostly vision
Enwreathed in the whirling snow.

For the hearts of lovers are fettered
In a sweet, mysterious way
Over miles of mountains and billows,
Communing by night and by day.
So here in my curtained chamber
I felt, in the firelight glow,
The shadow of death on my spirit,
And the chill of the drifted snow.

Hyacinths white he brought me,
Last year, in a sweet bouquet,
And a pure white hyacinth blossoms
On my window-sill to-day.
I scatter its waxen petals
On the page as I write my woe,
For the sake of the dead in Dakota,
Who died in a shroud of snow.

THE FATE OF A FLIRT.

A FROWN is on her pretty brow,
Her cherry lip she bites,
And on a sheet of satin note
In nervous haste she writes :
“ My darling Will : I cannot go
With you to-night to ride ;
Mamma is ill, and needs me here.—
Your loving Flora Hyde.”

“ My precious Charlie : I will be
So glad—I cannot write
How glad—to feel your kisses sweet
Upon my lips to-night !
In fancy I can almost feel
Your arms around me thrown.
Till then adieu.—Your Flora dear,
Forevermore your own.”

O Flora, Miss Flora,
Take care !
Of Cupid I bid you
Beware,
For he smiles to himself,
The sly little elf !
As he sits on the back of your chair.

She folds the dainty missives—one
Is pink and one is gray ;
She seals them both with crimson wax,
And sends them straight away.
But in her silken robes attired
She waits, and waits in vain,
For Charlie's step and Charlie's voice—
He never comes again.

At morning on the promenade
She meets him in her stroll—
He passes with a frigid bow
That chills her very soul.
And later, when upon her steed
She canters on the Mall,
The dashing Will goes driving by
And sees her not at all.

For Cupid has tricked
All three :
The letters were mixed,
You see.
And he smiles in his sleep
In a lily-cup deep,
Where he's rocked by a wild honey-bee.

Rings in the joy of Christmas-tide,
And merry maidens meet to deck
The doorways for a Christmas bride.

CHRISTMAS MORNING.

"A sapphire sky, a sparkling earth,
What bride could wed a day more fair
Than this, the morn when Christ was born?"
Cries Nell, the girl with golden hair.
"But let us see why lingers she;
It cannot be she would forget
'Tis time to don the marriage-robcs;
She sleeps o'erlate," says Margaret.

They seek her room, the bridesmaids two:
Through windows softly draped with lace
A flood of clear, cold sunlight falls
Upon her bed, upon her face.
In bridal robe and veil she lies;
Between her slender finger-tips
A spray of orange flowers, a smile
Of peace and love upon her lips.

Oh, Margaret! go, Margaret,
And tell the revellers below
No bridal train will pass to-day
From these old gables, roofed with snow;

For when the bells, with silver tongues,
Announced the dawn of Christmas-tide,
An angel lover crossed the sill
And kissed and claimed the Christmas bride.

ROSES IN PALESTINE.

SHE lived, the lovely Margaret,
Beside the surging sea,
Where evermore the wild waves fret
The coast of Normandy.
Her cheek was like the damask rose,
Like sunlight was her hair,
And white as virgin mountain snows
Her brow and bosom bare.

Her ancient lord with palsy shook
And tottered o'er the grave.
She wedded him with bell and book,
Her fallen race to save;
But dark with storm the wedding day,
And sour the wedding wine,
And sad the young knight far away
In the camps of Palestine.

She clasped her throat with rubies round,
Bound up her golden curls,
And for the feast in silk was gowned,
Sewn thick with milky pearls.
The minstrel old began to play,
The lights began to flame;
But with the lords and ladies gay
A guest unbidden came.

No knightly sword he bore in sheath,
He wore no plume of pride;
His face was pale; his name was Death—
He sought the lady's side;
He kissed her lips a deadly white,
And poison-spiced her wine—
All for the broken-hearted knight
Far off in Palestine.

They loosed her hair, a golden cloud
Or halo round her head;
They crossed her hands, and smoothed her shroud,
And left her with the dead.
Three days the skies were dun and drear,
For three nights fell the rain,
But on the fourth the skies grew clear,
The moon shone out again.

The priest looked from his window high
Upon the peaceful night,

And saw above the chapel fly
A dove with wings of white.
Like snow beneath the moon's mild ray
He saw its plumage shine,
And straight it shaped its course away
To far-off Palestine.

The good priest sought the chapel door
Next day at early dawn.
He found the shroud upon the floor,
He found the lady gone ;
But in the empty coffin, lo !
A red, red rose he found,
And one soft feather, white as snow,
Upon the sodden ground.

Upon a bloody battle-field
The yellow sun went down ;
On broken lance and battered shield
Its parting rays were thrown.
The earth was wet (but not with dew) :
Beneath a stunted pine,
A knight, his heart pierced through and through,
Lay dead in Palestine.

And oh ! most wondrous sign of love,
Where all was red with hate,
Upon his bosom sat a dove
And mourned the soldier's fate.

It died, but close beside him pressed,
And with its snowy hood
And all the feathers on its breast
Bedabbled in his blood.

Beneath the lurid suns that burned,
And moons of silver flame,
The warrior and the dove returned
To dust, from which they came.
But from their ashes sprang to light
Two roses, fair and fine,
And one was red, and one was white—
And they bloomed in Palestine.



THE SWALLOW'S STORY.

It was in an ancient country
Far away beyond the sea,
And a swallow at my window
Told the story unto me.
She was but a pretty peasant,
Fair of face and flaxen-tressed :
He, a young and handsome poet,
In a suit of velvet dressed.

Tapping with a jewelled finger
Lightly on the window-sill,
"Everywhere I go," he murmured,
"Tender glances haunt me still;
Not a lady at the palace
Has a face so fair as you,
Nor a waist so trim and slender,
Nor an eye so darkly blue.

"What is rank and what are riches?
Only accidents of birth;
So, you might have been a princess—
I, a tiller of the earth.
I will make your beauty famous
In a song all songs above;
You shall know how deep and tender
Is a poet's deathless love."

But the poet came no longer
When the snow began to fall,
And they hid the pretty peasant
And her woe beneath a pall.
Still, the village-maids, in summer,
Strew her grave with willow-leaves,
And the swallow, still returning,
Builds beneath the broken eaves.

In the south, among the roses,
Singing yet a jaunty air,

Now in praise of jetty lashes,
Now in praise of golden hair,
Now about Louisa's slipper,
Now about Lenora's glove ;
Light of heart the poet wanders—
Light of heart and light of love.

FOURTH OF JULY.

With a flutter of flags and the roll of the drum,
To the strains of the "Star-spangled Banner" they
come.

The soldier-boys bold,
In a glitter of gold,
Marching up through the streets of the city, behold !
And many a maiden with cheeks in a glow
Rains roses of scarlet and lilies of snow
From the balconies high as they gayly go by
On Liberty's birthday, the Fourth of July.

But, O soldiers that march, and O maidens that smile,
There are comrades unseen keeping step with the file,
Coming forth from the gloom
And the dust of the tomb,
Called up by the cannon that thunder and boom,

Pale spectres of heroes undaunted, who died
In the darkness and ice of the Delaware's tide,
And who heard the frail infant's first shuddering cry
On Liberty's birthday, the Fourth of July.

She was fragile at first as a storm-beaten rose,
But she grew and she thrived on the blood of her foes,
 Till immortally fair,
 With the stars in her hair,
She was ripe in her beauty to do and to dare,
And a king in his ermine with sceptre and crown
Was forced at her bidding his sword to lay down.
Ah! 'twere sweet at her feet in her service to die,
On Liberty's birthday, the Fourth of July.

So under the banners and blossoms to-day,
By the side of the citizen soldiery gay,
 They are marching in line,
 These spirits divine
Of rugged old heroes who knelt at her shrine.
Adams and Jefferson, sturdy and plain,
Washington, Franklin, and Anthony Wayne.
The dust of the years and the grave they defy,
The soldiers and statesmen of Fourth of July!

THE SECOND WIFE.

THROUGH yonder window, draped with lace,
The wintry sunbeams fall,
And gild anew the frame that holds
Her portrait on the wall.
I often stand before it here
And marvel at her grace ;
But she is dead and gone to dust,
And I am in her place.

She leans toward me in her robe
Of gold-embroidered blue ;
With eyes that read my very soul
She looks me through and through.
She gathers all the dying day
Upon her milk-white breast.
Her red lips part, and seem to say :
" He loved me, loved me best !"

Within the shadowy mirror set
Above the mantel high
I turn and see my pallid face.
No stately dame am I ;
My childish form is slight and small,
In gray demurely gowned,
The yellow curls above my brow
With simple ribbon bound.

But on the canvas at my side
Her regal figure stands,
With pearls about her lily throat,
And roses in her hands.
"Your beauty wins my jealous heart,
Sweet lips! my love has pressed.
Ah me! I do not wonder, dear,
That he should love you best."

Upon the lonely hill-top, crowned
With mournful pines a-row,
Her head-stone to the rising moon
Is gleaming from the snow;
And down the long and ghostly road,
Between his two young brides—
The living and the dead—apace
My lover-husband rides.

His steed is stamping on the stone,
His hand is on the door;
I hear the music of his feet
Along the marble floor.
I run to meet his kiss and hide
My face upon his breast:
"The queenly dead—she loved you well,
But I shall love you best!"

ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

WHEN winds are wild o'er hill and dale,
With one tall taper burning pale,
Here in this sombre, dimly lit,
And haunted room alone I sit,
On Christmas eve.

My pen is idle on the rack,
Great shadows lurk behind my back,
And through the curtain's parted fold
I see the snow on hill and wold
On Christmas eve.

To-morrow, clad in satins gay,
I'll dance the merry hours away;
But here to-night, in silence deep,
A phantom tryst alone I keep,
On Christmas eve.

For here in happier years ago,
Between the twilight and the dawn,
Love came to me, a god divine,
And pressed his glowing lips to mine,
On Christmas eve.

And when the moon was in the west
He died, his head upon my breast.
I took the roses from my hair
And laid them on his bosom fair,
On Christmas eve.

But still, wherever I might be,
The ghost of Love would come to me.
And what would all the people say
To see a phantom with me, pray,
On Christmas eve!

What though its eyes were darkly blue,
Its lips like roses steeped in dew?
So leave me with my haunted heart,
In this dim chamber far apart,
On Christmas eve.

For here alone I wait, and wait,
To hear his hand upon the gate.
For once a year across the snows
Love's lily spirit comes and goes,
On Christmas eve.



TWO GAY DECEIVERS.

In her mellow-lighted chamber,
Robed in shining silk she stands,
With a dainty note from Charlie
In her white and jewelled hands:
"Sweetest, fate to-night decrees it
That I shall not clasp thy waist,
Nor the dew of honeyed kisses

On thy lips of scarlet taste.
Friend is dying;
I am flying
To him. Kisses.—Yours, in haste."

Does she doff her silken garments?
Nay; she sets a blood-red rose
On her breast, and, gayly singing,
To the garden-gate she goes.
And the stars that twinkle slyly,
And the silver moon above,
They alone behold her rapture
When she meets her other love.
Lips a-meeting,
Tender greeting:
"Henry, darling!"—"Mabel, dove!"

Meanwhile Charlie breathes the perfume
Clinging to a maiden's hair,
For his friend it is a woman,
And a woman fond and fair.
Neither is she ill or dying,
For her cheek is far from pale. -
Further comment is unneeded,
For, alas! too true the tale—
Bartered kisses,
Stolen blisses—
Reader, let us drop the veil!

TWO VIEWS OF IT.

WHAT OPHELIA SAID.

ALAS! I gave him back his ring,
And joy and youth and everything
That brightness to my heart could bring

With it was taken.

Draw close the crimson curtain, so,
And shut the sunlight from my woe;
And if you love me, pray prepare
A willow wreath for me to wear—

I am forsaken!

WHAT I SAY.

Let down my heavy hair, Lizette,
And quick! my jewelled vinaigrette.
He called me "cruel" and "coquette,"

And all is over.

He only came last year from college.
He's gained, I think, some worldly knowledge
Of how a girl can sigh and smile,
And be a coquette all the while;
And as for me, I've gained a ring,
A diamond, too, a costly thing.
Lay out the dress that Worth combined
Of pink and azure; I must find

Another lover.

BEAUTY'S SUITOR.

In her garden, dim and dewy,
Beauty walked at close of day ;
Statues from the red rose-thickets
Glimmered through the shadows gray.
Shone a cold white star above her,
O'er the new moon's curvèd bar ;
She was fairer than the statues,
She was colder than the star.

Unto Beauty, 'mid the blossoms,
Came a suitor brave and tall,
With a voice of sweetest music,
Clearer than the thrush's call,
And in greeting o'er her fingers,
White and jewelled, bent him down.
Beauty smiled ; and thus emboldened,
He retained them in his own.

Then, while all about them gayly
Fire-flies glittered through the dusk,
And the flowers exhaled sweet odors,
Richer far than myrrh or musk,
And the fountain's crystal basin
Mirrored all the heaven above,
Into Beauty's ear her suitor
Sighed his tale of burning love :

“Lovely mistress of the garden,
You are mistress of my heart !
Life is but a heavy burden
When 'tis passed from you apart.
Turn your eyes in kindness on me ;
Listen to my suit, I pray ;
Say that you are mine, fair lady !”
Beauty frowned, and walked away.

Up the dark and tangled pathway
Fast he followed as she fled,
Knowing she was farther from him
Than the cold star overhead.
And she heard his steps pursuing,
And she turned, with scornful mien,
Flashing on him azure lightnings
From her blue eyes, like a queen.

“Haughty mistress of the garden,
But no longer of my heart !
Life would only be a blessing
Were it passed from thee apart.
And,” he said, “I know a fonder
Maid, if not so fair she be,
And I go to seek the presence
Of the gentle Annice Lee !”

Then he passed between the laurels
And the deep wet grasses through ;

And on Beauty's silken lashes
Bright drops glistened like the dew ;
While her woman's heart within her
Cried : " It is not yet too late !"
So she crossed the beds of lilies,
And she stopped him at the gate.

In the wood beyond it softly
Sang a love-lorn nightingale ;
And the statues from the roses
Leaned white brows and bosoms pale ;
Glowed the star and gleamed the fountain,
In the west the moon was low,
As repentant Beauty murmured :
" But I have not told you no !"

By the gateway, in the starlight,
Then she pledged her life to him—
To the gallant who came suing
Through the evening shadows dim.
Yesterday to old St. George's
Set the flood of fashion's tide :
Beauty's self and Beauty's suitor
Were the bridegroom and the bride.

THE OWL AND THE LOVER.

A MODERN FABLE.

THE ancient owl in the crumbling tree,
 “To-woo!” in his wisdom crieth.
“But it’s not such an easy thing, ah me!”
 The penniless lover sigheth,
“As when Phyllis carried the milking-pail,
 In the dew of the uplands shady,
Nor dreamed of a point-lace wedding-veil,
 And pined to be called ‘My lady.’
“For my love is a ‘delicate, dainty dear,’
 So I said last week in a sonnet,
And all of my income for over a year
 Wouldn’t buy her an Easter bonnet.
So what is the wisest for me to do?
 I would fain from your wisdom borrow.”
But the owl in the shadow cried “To-woo!”
 “No, no,” said the youth; “good morrow.”

L’ENVOI.

She wedded a lord and went over the sea;
 And his broken heart he carried
To the wood and lived with the owl? Not he:
 A maid with a million he married!

THE OTHER SIDE.

THE past long dead has risen again ;
I sit between the April rain

And my own tears.

Beside me stands the olden Grief,
And in her hands she holds the leaf,
The bitter memorandum brief

Of other years.

Some letters written, clear and bold,
With faded ink and yellowing fold ;

A miniature

Of him who wrote ; his sunny hair
Matched his blue eyes and laughing air,
And face unlined by pain or care,

Yet nobly pure.

A scrap of printed paper torn
As if in haste, and soiled and worn,

Thereon his name

In the long column of the "dead."
My whole life darkened as I read,
And all a blank to heart and head

The world became.

The sun grew dim forevermore ;
A shadow entered at the door,
 Ne'er to depart.
A band of pain my forehead bound ;
I passed into the garden-ground,
And all the while I heard the sound
 Of my own heart.

'Twas Sabbath morn ; from tower and town
The bells from every church sent down
 Their summons sweet.
As sick as blossoms in a drouth,
I turned my face to north and south :
No wind that breathed upon my mouth
 Could cool its heat.

I lifted up my burning eyes,
But saw no mercy in the skies ;
 I made this moan :
" Thus soon in life my winter-time
Has happened ere my summer's prime,
And all my flow'rs are white with rime,
 My joy-birds flown !"

A crimson-breasted robin rang
His notes near by, and what he sang
 Took words to me :
" Cease, cease your wail ; each bud a-glowing

From some beloved one's grave is growing,
And mourner's tears are always flowing,
From sea to sea."

All this was long and long ago,
And now perhaps 'tis better so ;
Time cannot lay
Effacing hands upon the gold
Of his bright locks, nor make him old ;
A lover ever young I hold
As mine alway.

Sometimes through dreams his blue eyes shine,
I feel his lips are pressed to mine ;
And from my rest
I stretch my arms out through the night,
But only clasp the pillow white,
Or pallid moonbeams' phantom light
Upon my breast.

Apart from mated ones of earth,
This side my dark and lonely hearth
I sadly bide,
And nurse the heart that would not break.
But there's a seat that none may take,
A place kept empty for his sake,
The other side.

THE QUEEN OF MAY.

“Down beside the rippling water
Stands a fairy cot alone.
All its doors and all its windows
Are with ivy overgrown;
Ancient trees with mighty branches
O'er its mossy gables sway,
And within you'll hear her singing,
Sweet and low, the Queen of May.

“Oh, the whiteness of her bosom
And the redness of her lip!
Honey bees forsake the blossoms
Of its crimson dew to sip;
And the curls of shining yellow
That across her forehead stray—
Oh, I ne'er can tell the beauty
Of the dainty Queen of May!

“Through the country idly strolling,
Here and there and everywhere,
In a suit of homespun russet,
With a spirit light as air,

I beheld the youths and maidens,
In their Sunday garments gay,
Dancing round a throne of myrtle
Where she sat, the Queen of May.

“Oh, the walk with her by moonlight
I shall nevermore forget!
Nor the kiss I stole at parting,
For its sweetness thrills me yet.
Time may come, relentless, turning
All my locks to silver gray,
But I still shall be the lover
Of the charming Queen of May.

“Would that I by Avon water
Evermore with her might dwell,
But afar in Girton Manor
Waits the Lady Isabel—
Waits in all her bridal splendor,
Silk and lace and orange spray,
I must wed her on the morrow
And forget the Queen of May.

“But in all the years to follow
I shall see in lonely hours
Far away a fairy cottage
In the ivy and the flowers,

And a window's snowy curtains,
Which the breezes gently sway,
And a maiden's face between them,
Fresh and fair, the Queen of May."

So he sighed, the gay young gallant,
Laying by his rude disguise,
Seeing still the smiles of Phyllis,
And the love-light in her eyes.
High-born bride and youthful noble,
Dust in earth long since are they ;
And the yews in some old churchyard
Gloom her grave, the Queen of May.

But in books of gilded leather
Still upon our library shelves
In the poet's lore she liveth,
With the archers and the elves.
In her beauty, bright, immortal,
Thrones may fall and creeds decay,
Still she treads a merry measure,
Blossom-crowned, the Queen of May.

DOLLY OF DEVONSHIRE.

Oh, dainty Dolly Dimple,
A pretty maid are you,
A rosebud in your golden hair,
A ribbon on your shoe.
There's song upon your ruddy lip
And laughter in your eye,
And gallant may the wooer be
Who wins you by-and-by.

But tell me, charming Dolly,
Who is it lingers late,
When all the cows are milked and housed,
Beside the rustic gate?
His hair is like the raven's wing;
He is not over young,
But yet he hath a melting eye
And honey on his tongue.

Oh, where is Dolly Dimple?
With many a plaintive low,
About the dewy uplands
The cows a-mourning go.

Here is a rose, she dropped it
And trod it in the clay,
When with the wily stranger
Last night she fled away.

She sleepeth—Dolly Dimple—
Her brief young life is past,
And Death he was the wooer
That won the prize at last.
She resteth after sorrow,
No wedding-ring of gold
Shines on the slender finger
That moulders back to mold.

The graveyard joins the meadow,
And so it comes to pass
The brown-eyed cows look over
Upon the tangled grass;
And wild bees seek the bramble
That from her ashes starts,
For sweetest are the blossoms
That spring from broken hearts.

LOVE'S LILY.

IN an orchard, with the sunbeams
Long and slender slipping through
Ancient branches blossom-laden,
Pink and pearl against the blue,
With a youth of wondrous beauty,
Locks of gold and eyes of light,
And a brow of Saxon fairness,
In my dreams I walked one night.

Low the flowery boughs above us
Bent, and all the air was sweet;
And a light wind sent the petals
Floating softly to our feet.
Every dewdrop was a diamond,
And a thousand to a spray,
For the time was in the morning,
And the year was in the May.

As we walked, within the hollow
Of a rock we found a pool,
Graceful branches drooping o'er it
Kept its quiet waters cool.

Smooth and silv'ry like a mirror,
Crystal clear as April rain.
"This," he murmured, "is the fountain
That De Leon sought in vain."

Then beneath the perfumed arches
Came a round and rosy boy,
With a quiver full of lilies,
Singing clear as if for joy.
And he dropped a flower in passing
From his glowing finger-tips.
Said the youth: "'Tis love!" and turning,
Touched my forehead with his lips.

Upward soared a lark to heaven,
With the angels to rejoice.
Back between the banks of blossoms
Came the sound of love's sweet voice,
Some new passion filled and thrilled us,
Lips and hearts were nearer drawn.
Then I woke to find the winter
And the dull and dreary dawn.

Gone the dew-bespangled branches,
Gone the silvery fount of youth,
Lark and lilies, love and lover—
All an airy dream in truth.

But I watched the cold rain falling
From the gray and sunless skies,
And I sighed for tender glances
And the blue of love-lit eyes.

Many a gallant comes to woo me ;
Empty words their pleadings seem ;
Not a one is fair and noble
As the lover of my dream.
And I know that somewhere under
Skies that snow or suns that shine,
Near or far, he has his being,
And his spirit yearns for mine.

It may be, alas ! that never
Here on earth our paths shall meet ;
Love will never leave a lily
From his quiver at my feet.
Yet beyond the Vale of Shadows,
And beyond the Crystal Gate,
In the morning, in the May-time,
I shall find my spirit's mate.

I shall know him by his graces
And the glory of his hair.
I will drink at youth's bright fountain,
And, like him, be more than fair.

We will walk the dewy orchard,
We will hear the seraphs sing,
And will find love's lily blowing
In a long, immortal Spring!

LOVE AND FASHION.

I. HIS LOVE.

THE fairest was she of all beautiful girls,
In a frostwork of lace and a shimmer of pearls,
As we stood in the starlight; the year was yet new,
And night's ebon tresses were dripping with dew.
The lilies were out; till I go to my grave
I shall never forget the faint odor they gave.
Her hair was like gold and her words were like wine;
I pressed the soft fingers that nestled in mine.

They were ringed with rare jewels that shone in the dark,
The diamond's white fire and the ruby's red spark,
Worth triple the sum that I earned in a year.
The wind swayed the branches, she shivered with fear.
A bird in a dream called aloud in its nest,
A sigh heaved the laces that folded her breast.
Her eyes were so blue and her lips were so red,
I kissed them—oh, better by far were I dead!

That was ten years ago, I am still in my prime,
But to me in my sorrow 'tis æons of time.
That kiss on my lips, which remembered can thrill,
Was the first and the last, and it hallows them still.
I saw her to-day and her glances were cold
As the ice, for to her I am vulgar and old.
She is fair as of yore, she is far as the sky,
But I love her, I love her, and shall till I die!

II. HER DREAM.

Take my mantle of sable, Elise, and my gown,
The sweep of the satin is weighing me down.
It is winter, but open the window for air;
I stifle! I saw him to-day on the square,
My old lover who wooed me before I was sold
In the market of fashion and folly for gold.
He was broken and bent, he was haggard and gray,
But my heart leaped again to the flower of its May.

I shall hate evermore the white shimmer of pearls,
For I wore them that night twisted into my curls.
The skies were a-sparkle with stars beaming bright,
Like the faces of angels enhaloed with light;
They saw when he kissed me; oh! never again
Shall I thrill at the pleasure so deep it was pain;
At the sweetness, the rapture, the joy, and the bliss,
That burst into flame on my cheek at his kiss!

Ah, me ! 'twas the last time that ever we met.
He does not remember : I cannot forget
That kiss in the starlight ; I start from my sleep
Sometimes to its pressure, but waken to weep,
Or sink to my slumbers again, but to dream
Of a rose-hidden house by a slow sunny stream,
Where encircled by love, as an isle by the sea,
These satins and sables are nothing to me.

III. AT LAST.

His grave on the hill-side has never a stone,
But with nightshade and nettle and thistle is grown.
In the valley below, in a white palace tomb,
She was laid with parade of the pall and the plume.
But afar in the country where fashion is naught,
Nor maidens unwilling by millions are bought,
They have met, and who knows, with their griefs over-
past,
They may dwell in the rose-hidden cottage at last ?

THE SPIRIT OF SAPPHO.

I SAID to a blue-eyed poet :
" Oh, tell me how do you know
The stars are the eyes of angels
Watching the world below ? "

"How do you know the lily
Droppeth her petals proud,
Down on the damp earth under,
To make the dead bird a shroud?"

And this was the poet's answer:
"Why, once at the twilight's close,
The spirit of Sappho told me
Through the sweet red lips of a rose."



THE STUDENT.

I HAVE learned not the lore of the volumes
That gather the dust on the shelf,
Nor the delicate veins of the roses,
Nor the sinew and bone of myself,
Nor the earth with its rock-hidden treasures,
Nor the sky with its stars and its strife,
Nor the sea with its mermaid monsters—
Not these, but the lesson of life:

That an atom of gold-dust weighs ever
All the hearts in creation above,
That diamonds are better than kisses,
And money is better than love.

Vice goes in the garment of folly,
Or wears the gray gowns of the prudes,
And woman is servant to fashion,
And man is a creature of moods.

When love with the face of an angel
And the rags of a beggar-boy lay
In my path, I passed on to the palace
Of Mammon, and strove to be gay.
But over the rustle of satins,
The songs of the fair and the brave,
And the silvery ripple of laughter,
I heard the last groan that he gave.

And often I lie in the midnight,
When the casement is dripping with rain,
And long for the peace of my girlhood
Ere I wakened to passion and pain ;
When I lived with the birds and the blossoms
In a little brown cottage I knew,
And dreamed that all women were stainless,
And men were all noble and true.

Ah ! bitter and hard was the lesson,
In anguish and weariness learned ;
And these are the laws and the tenets
That into my brain it has burned :

There is nothing so high or so holy
That it cannot be purchased with gold,
And virtue and honor and beauty
Are wares to be bartered and sold.

So give me the gown of the doctor,
And LL.D. to my name,
Though Hebrew to me is a jargon,
And Latin and Greek are the same,
And sealed are the secrets of ocean,
And of sky with its splendor and strife.
I have mortgaged my soul for the knowledge,
But have mastered the lesson of life!

LOVE FORGOT.

WHEN the stars began to glow,
And the dew was on the flower,
Through the lilies bending low,
Came death's angel to her bower.
In his hand an opiate,
Immortelles upon his breast.
"Lo!" he said, "it groweth late;
I would lead thee unto rest,

" Ah, I know a pleasant place,
In a valley green and deep !
With the fathers of thy race,
Long and sweetly wilt thou sleep."
But to Love she fondly clung,
Peering through his golden hair.
" Ah," she cried, " I am too young,
And the world is all too fair !"

She had wept all night alone,
Breaking heart and aching head,
And her face was worn and wan
As a watcher's by the dead.
O'er the crisp snow in the street,
When the dark began to wane,
Heard she Death's approaching feet,
Saw his shadow on the pane,

Called she through the frosty gloom.
" Fickle love forgot," said she :
" When the roses cease to bloom,
With the swallows, south went he.
Dusk and dawn I wake and weep ;
Pray thee, lead me unto rest."
Spoke the pitying angel, " Sleep ;
Fold thine arms across thy breast."

Marble bust and vine beneath,
In the valley green and deep,

Like a lily in its sheath,
Long and sweetly doth she sleep.
Love, the fair, of fickle heart,
Plucks the purple violets there,
That from her sad bosom start,
For a newer love to wear.



THE STATUE.

WORKMEN in a temple hoary,
Found her buried in the gloom
And the dust of Grecian glory,
Like a lily in a tomb.
And a man of wealth and leisure
Chanced upon the spot to be,
And he bought her for his pleasure,
And he took her o'er the sea.

In a lofty niche he set her,
Where he might, from desk or chair,
Lift his eyes from leaf or letter
And behold her beauty rare.
"Ah!" he cried, "if thou wert human,
I could worship at thy feet,

Statue of a perfect woman,
In thy majesty complete !”

Sweet the praise—she thrilled to hear it,
And the man’s impassioned tone,
For a Roman maiden’s spirit
Was imprisoned in the stone.
So she grew to love her master,
Ever longed his form to fold,
Kiss the brow of alabaster
And the clustering curls of gold.

At the time when Summer closes,
And the birds forget to sing,
And the ruin of the roses
Gloom and shadow seems to bring,
To the room of stately splendor,
Where the statue stood in pride,
Came a lady lily slender
And as fair—his promised bride.

“Look,” he said, his arm around her,
“At this costly treasure here.
In a temple old they found her,
Shrouded in the earth, last year.
Many an eve, alone and lonely,
’Twixt the twilight and the dew,
With her for companion only,
Do I sit and dream of you.”

Thus he talked in lover's fashion,
And the lady fair caressed,
While a storm of jealous passion
Filled the marble maiden's breast.
Oh, to feel again the solemn
Dust of ages, long ago,
Underneath the broken column,
Heavy on her bosom's snow !

In the mist of early morning
Sounded clear a passing bell,
And without a sound of warning
From her lofty niche she fell.
Lo ! a cloud of dust arisen
From the fragments heav'nward stole ;
Breaking from its marble prison,
'Twas the Roman maiden's soul.

Centuries since, with gesture tragic,
She had scorned a sculptor's heart,
And he called the aid of magic
To the service of his art,
Saying : " To the marble wedded,
Dumb alike to joy or tears,
In a foreign soil imbedded,
Thou shalt lie a thousand years ! "

So the curse by him elected
Came to pass with all its pain.

From the darkness resurrected,
She had loved, like him, in vain.
Said the lover to his servants
(And they hastened to obey,
For the thousand years were over),
"Take the broken bits away!"



ROMANCE.

STARLESS and stormy, and subtle and slow,
Like a widow arrayed in the weeds of her woe,
O'er the desolate moor, and the turreted town,
The black night came down.

I lost, in the mist and the darkness, my way;
Around me the waste in its loneliness lay,
And a sad, heavy heart in my bosom I bore,
Alone on the moor.

Then out of the mist-wreaths that round me were blown,
A strong hand extended, enfolded my own,
And a voice from the darkness came clarion-clear
To my listening ear.

The voice, like a father's voice, bade me beware,
The hand, like a lover's hand, led me with care,
Till the light of the town glimmered out thro' the rain,
Then they vanished again.

The day goeth up, and the day goeth down,
And I watch and I wait in the turreted town,
For some dim, dewy eve, coming over the moor,
He may knock at my door.

And I wish to be ready to welcome my guest,
In a misty white gown, with a rose on my breast;
Oh, delay not o'erlong, for I watch and I wait
For thy step at the gate!



THE LADY OF THE GRANGE.

His tossed and tangled locks the snows
Of countless winters bore,
The wrinkles on his dark old face
Were full a hundred score;
He might have been a hundred too,
This wreck of time and change,
Who dozed upon the bench all day
Before the ancient grange.

But came a time that comes to all,
When long and loud and late,
An angel with a sable plume
Stood knocking at the gate.
And we who watched beside his bed
At midnight heard a tale
That made our souls with horror cold,
And turned our faces pale.

“A little after I am dead,
Go touch the secret spring
In yonder panelled wall, and find
A dark and dreadful thing.
A robe of velvet wraps it round,
And ropes of milky pearls
Are on its neck and on its arms,
And in its yellow curls.

“You know the statue with the scythe
Beneath the branching lime,
Where crimson roses climb to kiss
The face of Father Time.
Blood-red are all the buds that burst,
Blood-red the petals be,
But redder still the ghastly dew
That wet the parent tree.

“Judge not. ’Twas more than I could bear;
Her lips to his were pressed,

I slew her, and she shrieked his name
And died upon my breast.
He fled, for but a boy was he,
A stripling straight and slim ;
To save myself I gave it out
That she had gone with him.

“ Long ere the summer dawn was gray,
I brought her up the stair,
And o’er her lily brow I drew
The glory of her hair ;
But still between the drooping curls
Her sightless eyes looked through,
And so I turned them to the wall
And slid the panel to.”

All night he raved of murdered eyes
That looked his life away,
Till inky clouds obscured the stars
An hour before the day.
A peal of thunder rent the skies,
A bolt of lightning came,
And bore his wicked soul away
Upon its breast of flame.

Around the statue with the scythe
Yet still the roses climb,
And seem to set with blood a-drip
The throat of Father Time.

But ever when the moon is old,
A ghost is said to range
The weedy walks, with yellow curls,
The lady of the grange.



THE SHELL.

COME hither from your play, my dear,
Come hither unto me,
Look in the hollow of my hand
And tell me what you see.
A dainty egg from out the nest
We found in yonder dell,
So fragile that a finger tap
Would break the fairy shell.

But in the hollow of my hand
Yet more I hold, say I :
A rapid wing, a saucy bill,
A black and beaming eye,
A throat from which a bubbling spring
Of melody will swell—
The bird unborn that sleepeth yet
Within the azure shell.

Go find for me the low, green bough
Whereon I found the nest,
And lay it gently there beneath
The mother's brooding breast ;
But handle it with loving care
(And heed ye what I tell),
For all the music of the year
Lies hidden in the shell.

These forms of fleeting flesh and blood,
However bright and fair,
But keep the sleeping soul within
From Heaven's immortal air.
But when the wings have grown too strong
For such a narrow cell,
As doth the robin in the wood,
We, too, shall break the shell.



HER FLIRTATION.

THE house was in woodbine embowered,
Set deep in the murmuring trees,
With a garden where hollyhocks flowered,
And pansies—the beds of the bees.

The lark was a musical comer
In the morn when the grasses were wet,
And 'twas there that I tarried one summer—
A summer I cannot forget.

He had not the beauty of Harry,
Whom I met at the Vanderbilt's ball
Last winter, and whom I'm to marry
At Lenox, you know, in the fall ;
Nor the manners of Charley, who dances
The German divinely ; and yet
In his ways and his smiles and his glances,
There was something I cannot forget.

I counted some freckles one morning
On the top of his classical nose.
Little time did he spend in admiring
Himself, like the rest of my beaux.
The cane, the cravat, and the collar
Are so much to the men of my set,
But these tailor-made pets of the parlor
We love, and we leave and forget.

We rowed in the dusk on the river,
Oh, all the sweet nonsense I said !
We read—I am all in a shiver
When I think of the books that we read.

I thought that my heart was in armor,
For I was a millionaire's pet,
And he was the son of a farmer—
A fact that I could not forget.

His manhood alone was he rich in,
And I was brought up in the town,
And how should I look in a kitchen
At work in a calico gown?
So I bade him good-bye and we parted;
I confess that I felt a regret:
Poor fellow! he looked broken-hearted,
But by now he has learned to forget.

What is it you say? That my praises
Are less to him now than my blame,
That he is asleep in the daisies,
And dying, he called on my name.
If the gulf was too wide to bridge over,
Oh, why should we ever have met?
But under the dew-jewelled clover,
In his grave he at least can forget.

L'ENVOI.

She lives in a flutter of fashion,
Her dresses are marvels of art,
But the ghost of a sorrowful passion
Is draining the blood from her heart.

There are thorns in her garland of roses,
The pain of a bitter regret,
For she talks in her slumber, and chooses
The lover she cannot forget.



TO THE POET.

Ah! poet aspiring,
Seek not, I pray,
A crown of the stars
Of the Milky Way.
Of the flowers of the field
Make a garland gay,

Lest you reach for the stars
Above your head,
And they fade in the glory
Of dawn instead,
And you find the flowers
At your feet are dead,

And you stand in the morn,
In the chilly air,
With empty hands
And your forehead bare,
And not even a garland
Of weeds to wear!

MY TREASURES.

THIS little silver key unlocks
My polished ebon treasure box,
A wealthy friend a present made
Of it to me, 'tis gold inlaid ;
Throw back the lid, a faint perfume
Floats out and lingers in the room,
'Tis from that silken packet small
Of violet dust ; but that's not all.

Some letters which my loving touch
Has worn with reading long and much,
And postmarked at an ancient town
Beyond the sea ; some blossoms grown
In English roads and ways, the blue
Forget-me-not of lovers true,
Which for me from the spring's green lane
A dear hand gathered in the rain.

But last and most of all behold
What lies within that snowy fold
Of tissue paper ; careful be,
But open it, and there you'll see
A single tress of dusky hair,
Fine as the spider's silken snare,

Cut from its kindred curls and sent
To me in this new continent.

The ruby red and diamond star,
Not they our greatest treasures are.
There is no gift we prize above
The gift which speaks of those we love;
Oft is the costly brooch flung by
Forgotten, while with moistened eye,
Its owner lingers to caress,
Like me, a tiny silken tress.

THE CHRISTMAS DREAM.

THE snow was in the valley,
The snow was on the hill,
The Christmas stars were shining,
And all the house was still;
The midnight clocks awoke me,
I saw beside my bed
An angel in a moonbeam,
With lilies on his head.

He spoke in tones of music,
Like sweetly-chiming bells,
That ring on crystal mornings
O'er frosty fields and fells:

"The ice is on the fountain,
The world is in a drift,
I come from Christ, the Giver ;
What wouldst thou for a gift ?"

I saw, as in a vision,
A castle in the air,
With coffers full of jewels,
And all for me to wear.
"Oh, give me gold in plenty !"
Was my impatient cry.
"So be it !" said the angel,
And left me with a sigh.

The snows were changed to roses,
The vale was bright below ;
But round my rocky castle
No living flower would blow.
I loved the roses better
Than all the gems I wore—
The pink and dewy roses
That climbed the cottage door.

Came Christmas, bringing gladness
To all the homes of men,
I pressed a sleepless pillow,
The angel came again.

I prayed him, "Give me glory,
A long and bright career!"
He dropped a wreath of laurel,
And vanished with a tear.

Unheeded round me blossomed
The beauty of the spring—
Blue violets in the meadows,
And birds upon the wing.
In musty tomes I pondered
The fate of ancient Rome,
Nor heard the larks of heaven
That sang about my home.

The world with all its passions
Was like a printed scroll
To me; its sins and sorrows
Were branded on my soul.
I knew the bitter flavor,
The Dead-sea fruit of fame,
When at the Christmas season
Again the angel came.

The room was half in shadow,
For low the tapers burned,
And wearily the pages
Of antique lore I turned;

When lo! I felt his presence—
A breath of Eden rare—
And caught the lilies' perfume
That lay about his hair.

I bent the knee before him,
"Oh, give me love!" I cried,
"For all an empty pageant
Is wealth and fame and pride."
With hand upraised in blessing,
Behold! he bent and smiled,
Then broke the Christmas morning,
And all the bells went wild.

The angel was a vision
Of moonlight and the snow,
The rest I slept and dreamed it,
That midnight long ago.
But as I twine the holly,
The walls of home to cheer,
Blue eyes and tender glances
And loving lips are near.

For Christ is still the Giver,
And life the Christmas tree,
And love and gold and glory
Upon its branches be.

But let the bells of Christmas
Proclaim it east and west:
Of all the gifts upon it
True love is still the best.

SEVENTY-ODD.

“DEAR child! ’tis good of you to leave
Your brothers on the sunny lawn,
That in my room I may receive
Your presence, brighter than the dawn.
I looked so sad and lonely here,
You came to sit with me, you say—
How should I look but sad, my dear,
When I am seventy-odd to-day?”

“Bring here that quaint old cedar chest,
’Twas brought from over seas when new.
I wish to show you how I dressed
When I was young and fair, like you;
When every wrinkle was a rose,
And these dim eyes were full of light—
This neck and brow like drifted snows—
These tarnished tresses golden-bright.”

“ This silken gown of faded pink,
 This kerchief, creased and folded still—
I wore them both last time, I think,
 I walked and talked with Philip Hill.
This bonnet, too, with flaring brim
 And long, moth-eaten, drooping plume,
He said it fanned a cheek to him
 More fair than any rose in bloom

“ How bright his brown eyes were! how free
 His step! how clear his voice! He died
At twenty-two, and so to me
 Has never changed with time or tide.
It seems so strange—and yet 'tis true—
 That he should still be young and gay—
That he should still be twenty-two,
 While I am seventy-odd to-day.

“ But here I keep you, all too long,
 From playing in the garden-bowers;
The feet of youth are light and strong,
 And love to dance among the flowers.
Go! let me doze; perchance a dream
 My vanished girlhood may restore
Awhile, and let me by the stream
 We loved with Philip walk once more.

"So kiss me child, and say good-bye,
Until you come to say good-night,
Life's morning has a rosy sky
For you, and yours is youth's delight.
A lover, too, will come at last
For you, and bear you far away.
For me is only left the past,
For I am seventy-odd to-day."

The child beneath the spreading trees
Played with her brothers till the west
Was crimson and the evening breeze
Began to lull the world to rest.
Then with a cluster in her hand
Of creamy lilies, cool and fair,
She left the merry-hearted band
And climbed again the broad oak stair.

With spikes of crumbled lavender,
That though in ashes, yet were sweet,
The faded dress half hiding her,
The great poke bonnet at her feet,
The aged woman sat, her eyes
Fast closed, but not in sleep, for lo!
She woke, and walked in Paradise
With Philip Hill, an hour ago.

And who shall say the angel Death,
In brighter worlds beyond our ken,
Gave not, at passing of her breath,
Her youthful beauty back again ?
The child was wise beyond her years,
And, stooping on her breast to lay
The lilies, murmured through her tears,
"She is a girl again to-day."

A DEAD BOUQUET.

In the midst of cast-off laces
And crumpled gloves to-day,
In a disused drawer I chanced to find
A dusty and dead bouquet.
Buds that never unfolded,
Once pink, now ashen gray,
And withered roses of faded gold,
Once bright as the morning ray.

The gifts of my first lover,
He brought them through the snow,
The skies were dark with a coming storm
And the wind was moaning low.

But we were glad together,
My cheeks were all aglow
Beneath the gaze of his dark eyes—
Ah, that was long ago!

From beauty and from beldam,
From castle towers of stone,
Frail cottage rocking in the blast,
Grave watcher all alone,
And leader of gay revels,
Goes up the same sad moan,
Through mirk and mist to star and sun,
“If I had only known!”

Before the lips were silent,
And death took off the dame,
Before the bow was drawn, and sent
The arrow to its aim,
Before we took the journey,
Before the steed fell lame,
Before the light good-bye was said,
Before the new love came.

Though hearts be true and tender,
And kisses fond, I ween
A handsome face and form of grace,
And smooth white brow serene,

And melancholy glances
Can sometimes come between.
Forgetfully I reached the rose,
And found the thorns were keen.

Brittle and broken blossoms,
Roses of faded gold,
Your beauty and mine have gone for aye,
And love like a corpse is cold.
But tell me, ere you are scattered
Abroad on the garden mold,
Tell me which was the true love,
The new love or the old.

Out of the dust of the roses
My spirit cries in pain :
Under the skies of Paradise
Will they their bloom regain ?
Will the ashen buds be blossoms
Washed by the heavenly rain,
And smiling, with them in his hands,
Will the old love come again ?

GURNEY'S ROSES.

OVERHEAD the skies were dark,
Full of flying flakes the air;
In my garden one could mark
Only branches, black and bare,
Leafless now, but once inwrought
With the fairest flowers that blow.
Such the night when Gurney brought
Roses to me through the snow.

Winter in the world without
Glazed the lake and rocked the tree,
Piled the drifted snows about
Deeper yet, if that might be;
But into my room he brought
Summer, with its warmth and glow.
Oh, it was a lovely thought,
Bringing roses through the snow!

"Eyes of midnight, curling hair,
Cheek where burns the blood of France,
Spirit quick to do and dare,
Like a knight of old romance."

Gazing on him thus I thought,
While we talked in murmurs low
Of the roses that he brought,
Of the winter and the snow.

Meantime, Cupid, who had kept
Safely hidden all the while
In a rose's heart, and slept
Sweetly many a snowy mile,
Woke, and slyly smiling, wrought
Mischief with his gilded bow,
From the roses Gurney brought
To me through the falling snow.

When the sweet good-night was said,
And 'twas slumber in the land,
In the firelight's glimmer red,
With the roses in my hand,
Long I sat, and long I thought,
Till I kissed them in the glow—
Kissed the roses Gurney brought—
Lovely roses—through the snow.

THE OLD AND THE NEW.

A WHITE, ghostly fog and a chill, driving sleet,
So the night cometh down to the dark city street ;
Set the lamp farther off, that its glare may not fall
On her fixed, hollow eyes, staring hard at the wall.
Put back from her temples the gray, tangled hair,
It used to be golden, for once she was fair.
Hear the wind how it wails, and the cold is severe,
And it lacketh an hour of the end of the year.

She mutters of love, for again she lives over
The glad, happy days when she met her first lover,
When in silver-shot tulle and a necklace of pearls,
With a laugh on her lips and a rose in her curls,
And never a shadow of care on her soul,
She heard the sweet bells of old Trinity toll,
And inclined to his praises a shell-tinted ear,
While they merrily danced at the death of the year.

He is dead long ago ; 'mid the thunder and boom
Of the mad ocean billows he met with his doom ;
But the first love is purest and truest and best,
So she fancies her head is again on his breast,

And the rapture once more of his kisses she knows,
And down in the Valley of Shadow she goes
With a smile on her face, and with never a fear,
As the bells of old Trinity toll for the year.

The moon peepeth in through a rift in a cloud,
As we robe the poor clay in the folds of the shroud;
Cross her hands on her bosom, as if she would pray,
So—now lock the door and come softly away;
While the chimes that she heard in her youth long ago
Ring out from old Trinity over the snow—
Ring out from old Trinity silvery clear,
In a welcoming peal to the happy new year.

Up the crystalline vault whence the tempest hath gone,
Springs the star-kindled flame of the roseate dawn;
From its pearl-paven squares and bediamonded drifts
Its sun-gilded steeples the city uplifts,
And the sound of its bells goeth up like a prayer
From the people below, through the bright morning air;
But not one, as they pause the sweet music to hear,
Gives a thought to the woman who died with the year!

In the country immortal that lieth afar,
Which an archangel guards with a sword like a star;
Knee-deep in the lilies of summer she stands,
Who for years hath not fondled a flower in her hands.

She hath found her first love with the dark, tender eyes,
And together they roam where the day never dies,
And they reckon not time as we reckon it here,
But the round of a century stands for a year.

She hath left in the shroud in the city below,
The wrinkles of age and its tresses of snow ;
For God hath forever restored to her there
The red of her lip and the gold of her hair.
For this is the law of creation, behold !—
The new shall eternally spring from the old ;
So out of the dust of the past on its bier
In beauty perennial ariseth the year.

PAULDING THE PATRIOT.

IN the brightest noon of summer
There's a shadow on the place,
And a strange mysterious silence
Brooding at the statue's base.
Gun in hand, in bronze immortal,
Stands he ever, stern and bold,
As a man who loved his country
Better than a monarch's gold.

When the birds are in the branches,
And the flowers are at his feet,
Up the long, white road he gazes,
When it shimmers in the heat.
In the winter's storm and darkness
Still he watches all alone,
Though the wind is wild above him,
And the snow is on the stone.

Now, perhaps, I slept and dreamed it,
But I walked at twilight there,
When the star of Hesper glittered
In the dead day's golden hair.
Silence held the dusky valley
With a spell of sorcery,
And I spoke unto the statue,
And the statue talked with me.

"Sentinel of Sleepy Hollow,
Ever with a tireless eye
Peering in the gloomy shadows,
Tell me, tell me what you spy!
Are you never cold, nor weary
Of the mournful monotone
Of the wailing winds around you,
When the snow is on the stone?"

"Lo!" he said, "I watch for André,
Here his phantom comes and goes,
Sometimes in a cloud of blossoms,
Often in a veil of snows.
Gay in gold and scarlet, chanting
Love-songs of the long ago,
Past he rides in summer, flinging
Roses from his saddle-bow.

"But when all the hills are marble,
And of steel are all the lakes,
Comes a gray ghost in the gloaming,
Slowly through the falling flakes.
As his drooping figure passes,
All the branches madly moan,
For the wind is like a lion
When the snow is on the stone!"

As he ceased, upon his features
Fell a clear and solemn light;
From the trees the moon was rising
Through the still and starry night.
Into every crack and crevice
Of the bronze her glory stole,
As she floated up to Heaven,
Like a white and shining soul.

Patriot Paulding in the graveyard
Long is dust beneath the mold,
But his name shall live forever,
For he scorned a monarch's gold,
In that dim and haunted valley
Where his statue stands alone,
With the winds around it wailing
And the snow upon the stone!



THE PAGE OF CASTLE CLYDE.

'Twas in a land of old romance,
It happened long ago,
Between the fading of the rose—
The falling of the snow;
The daughter of an ancient earl,
Of royal blood was she,
And he was but her youthful page
In crimson livery.

The roses on her rounded cheeks,
They made the morning glad,
When from the castle gate she rode,
In gay green velvet clad.

The page was at her bridle-rein ;
They sought the dewy wood ;
For both a glory filled the air
That neither understood.

And lo ! they found a cottage there,
Around it cooed a dove,
And at her wheel a woman sang,
Her song was all of love ;
And, sitting silent on her steed,
With tears the lady heard,
Then bent to kiss her handsome page,
But neither spoke a word.

For in the music of the song
She felt her heart unfold,
She saw anew his eyes of blue,
His locks of ruddy gold ;
Forgot the pride of royal blood,
Of ancient name and race,
And from her milk-white steed she sprang
To meet his swift embrace.

The milk-white steed came slowly home
Through twilight's mist and gloom,
And from his empty saddle hung
The lady's hat and plume.

An odor sweet of bruised herbs
From forests deep he bore ;
But ah ! his rider—Castle Clyde
Beheld her nevermore.

The earl through all the country round
Sent forth his men in steel ;
They found the woman in the wood,
Still singing at her wheel.
“I saw two bonny birds,” she sang,
“Two birds but yester e’en,
And one was like a ruby red,
And one was gold and green.”

“O, hast thou seen my daughter fair,
O! hast thou?” cried the earl ;
“Her cheek was red, her hair was loose
In many a nut-brown curl.”
“I have not seen thy daughter fair,
For none have passed this way,
But young Prince Richard and his bride,
And that was yesterday.”

But leagues beyond the hills that hid
The towers of Castle Clyde,
’Twas said a foreign prince came home
And brought a bonny bride.

And she—so runs the chronicle,
Its leaves were brown with age—
Was like the daughter of the Earl,
The Prince was like her page.

CHRISTMAS ANGELS.

“TAKE your Christmas gifts away,
Jewels rare and dainty sweets,
For my heart this holy day
With a shade of sadness quits
Thinking ever with a sigh
Of a church-tower in the snow,
Underneath a starry sky,
Where forever to and fro
Christmas angels come and go.

“In the past—for which I grieve—
There we laid the loved ones down,
There we met on Christmas Eve
Singing of the cross and crown,
While the bells above us swung

From the dark tower, o'er the snow,
Telling, with a silver tongue,
To the dead that lay below,
Solemn things we may not know.

“Oh ! the yule is not so bright,
And the frost is not so keen,
And the snow is not so white,
And the holly's not so green.
Oh ! it is not half so glad
As at Christmas long ago ;
Ah ! it is not half so sad—
Then, behold ! across the snow
We could see the angels go.”

As he sighed for older times,
Smoothing down his beard of gray,
Lo ! between the crystal chimes
Came a sweeter sound than they ;
For a heavenly voice replied :
“Still as in the long ago
At the holy Christmas-tide,
To and fro across the snow
Christmas angels come and go.”

ROLAND'S ROSE.

'Twas Mistress Mary's birthday,
The twenty-third of June,
With all the buds unfolding
And all the birds in tune;
But rose or lily-blossom
Was not so fair as she,
And not a bird among them
As sweet of voice could be.

Now Philip wrote a sonnet
That rippled like the beck;
And Horace brought a necklace
To clasp her snowy neck,
All carven out of amber
That in the deep sea grows;
But Roland—bashful Roland—
He only sent a rose!

The stem was straight and slender
That held its queenly bloom;
Its heart was full of gold-dust
And laden with perfume;

And all its soft, pink petals
Blushed through a veil of dew,
For it had been the fairest
That in his garden grew.

She read the sonnet over,
And put the necklace by ;
But kissed the flower, with blushes,
When not a soul was nigh.
And when she walked with Horace,
At evening's dewy close,
Upon her heaving bosom
It nestled—Roland's rose.

But ere another birthday
Came round to her again,
Young Roland was a rover
Beyond the foaming main.
The buds of summer blossomed
At Mistress Mary's door,
And winds of winter withered,
But he returned no more.

Unsung and unremembered
Her birthdays went and came,
For Philip had forgotten
His early love, for fame ;

And Horace in a widow
Found balm for all his woes ;
So she was left ungathered,
To die, a faded rose.

Long since the amber necklace,
Unprized, she gave away ;
'Mid musty books and papers,
Unread the sonnet lay ;
But, tied with dainty ribbons,
She treasured up the flower,
And with her tears bedewed it
In many a secret hour.

Till came, one misty morning,
An angel in a cloud,
And took the aged woman
And robed her in a shroud.
She sleeps ; by her unheeded
Her birthday comes and goes ;
But with her dust is mingled
The dust of Roland's rose.

VOICES FROM ETERNITY.

"GREAT is my wisdom," the old man said,
"Great is my knowledge, and vast and deep;
The earth, and the air, and the ocean bed,
Have given their secrets for me to keep.
With years and honors my locks are crowned,
And greater yet shall my glory be!"
But a hand came out of the dark profound,
And a voice from the depths of Eternity:
"Let the pall be spread,
And the mourners meet;
A laurel for the dead,
And a winding-sheet."

"Ah," said the bride, in her beauty bright,
Dancing in time to her light young heart,
"We were wedded but yesternight,
Never again in the world to part."
But the hand came out of the chill March mist,
And rent the lace of her wedding-veil;
And the stars went out, and the winds were wist,
And she heard a voice in the shadows wail:

"A pillow for the head
For the robe is sweet;
And a song for the dead,
And a winding-sheet."

"I will build a palace so fair, so fair,"
Said the powerful king in his royal pride,
- That none shall call it beyond compare,
And no towers shall triumph o'er time and tide."
But the mighty hand from the dark was thrust,
And his ermine robes and the crown of gold
Were cast aside in the wayside dust,
And the solemn voice to the throne was rolled:
"Candles for the head,
And candles for the feet;
A requiem for the dead,
And a winding-sheet."

"I will sing," said the poet, "a song so clear,
So sweet and mellow, so long and loud,
That earthward turning an envious ear,
The lark will pause in the morning-cloud."
But the hand came out of the twilight gray,
And broke the strings of his lyre in two,
And sealed his lips with a seal of clay,
And the voice came down with the falling dew:

"In heaven," it said,
"Are songs more sweet;
Roses for the dead,
But a winding-sheet."

But by-and-by when the risen souls
Go down in their graves for the crumbling clay,
And the smoke of the burning world uprolls
In the sunset fires of the judgment day,
The sound of voices the sky shall fill,
Of friends that meet, and of foes forgiven,
Till the highest stars in the dome shall thrill
To the blended songs of the blest in heaven:
"Crowns for the head,
And harps for the hand,
And a flow'ry way to tread,
In the Morning Land!"



THE SONS OF THETA DELTA CHI.

Written for and dedicated to the Theta Delta Chi Fraternity.

IN every land beneath the sun
Where men are brave and true,
You'll find the flag, the silken flag,
Of black and white and blue;

A bond of loyal brotherhood,
And friendship's strongest tie,
The pride of noble hearts—the flag
Of Theta Delta Chi.

Beside the smoking cannon, cold
In death a soldier lay;
The dying sunlight on his breast
Awoke a diamond's ray.
He was the first upon the field
For honor's sake to die;
He wore the shield with jewels set,
Of Theta Delta Chi.

The student with his open book,
The bishop in his gown,
The soldier bearing on his brow
The laurel of renown,
The poet with his golden lyre,
All hear with sparkling eye
The name they love, the dear old name
Of Theta Delta Chi.

The truest friend, the noblest foe,
The fondest lover too,
Is he who proudly owns the flag
Of black and white and blue.

So gather round the banquet board,
And lift the goblet high—
Long live the sons, the gallant sons,
Of Theta Delta Chi!

THE GIFT OF ROSES.

To A. F.

BRIGHT from the kisses of the sun,
And wet with crystal dew,
From gardens of the morn I send
These roses unto you.
I take the ribbon from my hair
The thorny stems to bind,
And hide a message in each bud,
If you should care to find.

Think me not dreaming when I say
That I was once a rose.
I grew beyond the purple seas,
Within an ancient close.
From lone and lilyed waters sprang
A statue, white and tall,
And there I pressed my blushing breast
Against an ivied wall.

Oh, vainly wooed the nightingales !
I heard them not—for, lo !
I loved a prince, a blue-eyed prince,
Whose name I did not know.
His winning voice was silver sweet,
His hair was golden-bright,
And ever in my twining arms
He lay, at fall of night.

But came a dim and sultry eve,
The stars forgot to shine,
And stirless hung the drooping leaves,
And lifeless swung the vine.
They bore him on a velvet pall,
With slow and solemn pace ;
I let my paling petals fall
Upon his frozen face.

Ah ! this was centuries ago,
But I remember yet
His kisses on my crimson leaves,
And nevermore forget
Beneath the mellow moons of old
His lute's melodious tone,
And all the songs I sing to-day
Are echoes of his own.

So take these written pages up
And find the flowers within,
The roses veiled in velvet moss—
They are my next of kin.
Their vivid crimson fires my cheek,
Their blood within me glows,
Their pride and passion fill my heart,
For I was once a rose.

THANKSGIVING DAY.

BENEATH the homestead's sloping eaves
We gather round the board,
And for the golden harvest sent
Give thanks unto the Lord ;
But from the bursting bins and barns,
Oh, spare a thought, I pray,
For those who kept in wintry woods
The first Thanksgiving Day !

The face of heaven was veiled and dark,
And all the world beneath,
Of withered wood and wold, lay hid
Within a snowy sheath ;

They shivered in the bitter blast,
For thinly clad were they—
The pilgrim fathers long ago
Who kept Thanksgiving Day.

With all his train of feathered dames
Behind him in a row,
They saw a lordly bird with plumes
Like polished metal go ;
The aim was sure, the bullet true,
In throes of death he lay,
And feasting on his dainty flesh,
They kept Thanksgiving Day.

The graves wherein their fathers slept,
The fields and fells of home,
Were leagues beyond the forest dark,
Across the wintry foam.
Though want and fear abided there,
And peril barred the way,
Yet, lonely in a lonely land,
They kept Thanksgiving Day.

In all the pleasant fields about,
Upon the frosted vines,
Sweet Cinderella's fairy coach,
The golden pumpkin shines ;

And still with all his train of dames
The turkey struts away,
As in the winter-whitened woods
That first Thanksgiving Day.

Our fathers' graves are on the hill,
The dear ones at the knee,
The storehouse full of goodly things,
How grateful we should be !
They thanked the Lord for perils passed,
And for the right to pray,
Then let us doubly thank Him now
On this Thanksgiving Day !



THE PROMISE.

THE world was in a snowdrift,
The skies were dim and drear,
But love can make it summer
Through all the changing year.
The twilight and its shadows
Possessed the ancient hall ;
He drew her to his bosom—
Her lover, brave and tall.

“Oh, Elsie! ’witching Elsie!
You spread your golden hair,
And caught my heart forever
Within the silken snare.
I’ll bring a rose to-morrow
To match your lips,” he said,
“And blossom in the sunlight
That lies upon your head.”

But in the mist of morning
The bells began to toll,
An angel in the midnight
Had borne away his soul;
And in the churchyard corner
They left him to his rest—
The earth upon his eyelids,
A stone upon his breast.

The years, in marching onward,
Had rolled the stone away,
When Elsie, young no longer,
Came by one summer day.
A bramble caught her garment,
And would not let her pass,
For the grave of her first lover
Was in the tangled grass.

And lo ! a blood-red blossom,
Dew-heavy, from his heart—
Its every petal laden
With perfume—seemed to start.
And Elsie fell to weeping,
For in his last repose,
She knew that he remembered
And sent the promised rose.



HELIOTROPE.

ALL gowned in girlish white was she,
Broad hat and drooping feather,
And in her sister's garden we
Paced up and down together.
I told her all I dared to hope ;
With modest air she listened ;
I plucked a spray of heliotrope,
The dew upon it glistened.

“ Oh ! take this dainty flower, I pray,
And if you love me, wear it !
And if you bid me go away,
The flower—oh, do not spare it ! ”

She placed it shyly on her breast :
“ I thought you loved my sister,
Not me,” she faltered, then confessed
She loved me ; and I kissed her.

The church was hung with garlands gay
And lilies hid the Latin,
The very organ seemed to play
Of orange-flowers and satin.
But much the bridesmaids wondered why
The bride so fondly carried
A heliotrope bouquet ; and I,
Too, wore it : so we married.

Within our cottage all day long,
From basement unto rafter,
There is a sound of silver song,
And merry childish laughter.
She is the sweetest thing that grows
In earth, or air, or water—
This child with cheeks that shame the rose—
Sweet Heliotrope, my daughter !

SHAKSPERE.

O POET, thou wast like a flower
That opens in the sun and shower
 Beside the way ;
Though trodden on by careless feet,
Still, ever through the dust and heat,
It turns toward the skies to greet
 The perfect day.

O poet, thou wast like a lark
That slumbers in the dew and dark.
 Through all the night
The dreaming world below him lies ;
He meets the morn, he mounts the skies,
And wins the gates of Paradise,
 The heaven of light !



THE WORLD'S WAY.

A BIRD on a blossomed spray,
In the heart of the golden weather,
Sat singing the live-long day,
As my love and I together
Went down by the violet way—

My love with the dark and dreamy eyes,
Starry and still as the midnight skies.

Under the bare brown spray,
With eaten and rain-beaten feather,
Songless the dead bird lay
Where my love and I together
Had walked in the green of May.
And I pined for the light of his starry eyes,
And answered the moan of the wind with sighs.

Another bird on the spray
Sang in the crystal weather,
As my love and I one day—
A new love—walked together.
From the violets fringing the way
On the azure deeps of the summer skies
He had borrowed the blue of his laughing eyes.

Oh, a new bird on the spray
To sing in the gay green weather,
And a new love every day,
And a heart as light as a feather!
That is the old world's way.

Scattered the dust of the dead bird lies,
Forgotten the light of the dead love's eyes.

BESSIE'S WALK.

WHAT, mother! sitting in the dark!
I didn't know 'twas late.
Yes, it was John came home with me,
He left me at the gate.
But let me light the candle now,
And here your knitting bring,
I'll tell you all about my walk
Across the fields of spring.

In Farmer Sibley's meadow lot,
Where lies the crystal pool
That keeps beneath the old gray rock
Its waters clear and cool,
And 'neath the blasted oak to which
The twisted ivies cling,
I found a bed of violets blue—
The footprints of the spring.

And as I lingered by the stile—
No, not to wait for John,
But just to watch the fleecy clouds
Like ships go sailing on—
A robin on the mossy rail,
Sweet bird ! began to sing :
“ I come,” he said, “ from summer lands,
The troubadour of spring.”

Then John, he somehow happened by,
And stopped to talk awhile ;
And do you know, ah, mother dear,
He kissed me o'er the stile !
He slipped upon my finger, too,
A ring—a jewelled ring ;
The crescent moon came out to see,
The mild new moon of spring.

If I could choose from all the world,
From princes brave and tall,
Yet on my dark-eyed lover true
My choice would ever fall.
It seems that in my happy heart
A thousand robins sing ;
Ah ! mother, dear, of all the year,
The sweetest time is spring !

SNOW-FLOWERS.

I AWOKE one winter morning,
And I found my garden white
With a host of shining blossoms
That had not been there at night!
All the barren ground was covered,
And the naked branches quite.

For the angels, in the night-time,
Flying softly to and fro,
Bearing to the gates of heaven
Spirits from the earth below,
Had let fall upon my garden
Lovely garlands—flowers of snow,



THE LADY'S LEAF.

SITTING alone by the shaded light
Of the astral lamp in her room to-night,
Knowing no gallant will come thro' the sleet,
The wind, and the wet, to sigh at her feet,

Or brave such bitter and starless skies,
For even the light of her violet eyes,
My lady wonders what she will do,
To pleasantly pass an hour or two.

There are some who say that her lily brow
Was not always unruffled and calm as now;
That those soft eyes under their fringes deep,
In love and sorrow were known to weep;
That a pallor over her fair face falls,
At sight of a prison's darksome walls;
And that once when an old love-song she heard,
Those full rose lips with a sigh were stirred.
But she is a lover of gleam, not gloom,
The bird in its carol, the rose in its bloom,
And of all black shadows in moon or sun,
A prison wall is the blackest one.
If she wept 'twas when favorite Fanchon died,
'Twas the singer's skill in the song if she sighed,
Though certain it is that she will not be
Alone with her thoughts for company.

Shall she broider flowers on the shining silk?
The needle might roughen those hands of milk;
Shall she waken the organ's ivory keys
To Beethoven's master melodies?

Ah, no ! she will read, so she takes from the shelf
A book, it will lift her out of herself—
Her lonely thoughts, and the wild, wet weather,
And the dust is thick on the gilded leather.

But is there a spell on the printed page,
That her eyes grow dim as the eyes of age ?
She has shut her thoughts to the wind and rain,
But loosed the ghost of the Past again ;
In the dust and the dark for many a day
On the shelves of the library laid away,
From the open book on her silken knee,
It flutters out and at last is free.
Only a leaf, that in June once made
For the callow birds in the nest a shade ;
And touched by the frost of the early fall,
Was part of the wealth of a maple tall.
The ghost of a summer, a love most sweet,
And a life-long sorrow, it lies at her feet ;
To its delicate edges golden clear,
Save there it was dipped in the blood of the year—
A leaf from a maple bough long bare,
And a leaf from the life of the lady fair.

Purple with pansies, alive with bees,
The long gay garden again she sees ;
And the gate that led to the avenue,
Where the stately elms and maples grew,

Where he kissed her hand in the falling dew—
The fair-haired youth who was by her side,
In the mellow glory of autumn-tide,
When the purple pansies had long been dead,
And they walked with the maples overhead,
Splendid in scarlet and bronze and gold,
The while the hope of his heart he told.
But she listened, suddenly grave and cold,
For a shadow walked by the youth unseen,
Himself and the lady he loved between ;
He had, save the wealth of a true, true heart,
In the lands and gold of the world no part ;
And wealth was good, so she answered " Nay !
We were such good friends yesterday !"

Bright with wrath could his blue eyes gleam :
" Is this the ending of love's sweet dream ?
Were the smiles and blushes when I was nigh,
And the tender glances all a lie ?
With a face divine, and a heart of stone,
Coquette, coquette ! but I might have known
Your beauty was not for me to wear,
You have shattered my faith in all things fair ;
Yours was the power to ban or bless,
You have ruined my whole life's happiness !
As the leaf you gathered while walking here,
Is dipped in the blood of the blooming year,

So the snow-white hands I have kissed," he said,
"With the blood of my murdered soul are red!"
Then she heard his feet through the fallen leaves;
And the chill east wind that forever grieves,
Sprang up, and the clouds came over the day,
And love and summer had passed away.

The summer returned, but Love no more
Laughed in the leaves as he did before,
For ever in secret the lady mourned
The fair-haired youth she had loved and scorned.
The gulf between them could never be
Crossed by either again. Ah, me!
He had lost the light of his guiding star,
In ways of darkness had wandered far;
And how could she go in her dainty grace,
The sheen of her silk, and the mist of her lace,
In the stern stone walls of a prison place!
Weak was he, for his love was strong;
Cruel was she, but her whole life long
She will pay the price, in the soul unrest,
And hopeless yearning that fills her breast.
The drop of bitter in all things sweet.
That renders the round year incomplete.

The land lies dim in the dawning day,
The fire on the hearth is ashes gray,

The room is cold, and her face is white,
Like one who has watched by the dead all night.
But colder it is in that bolted cell,
Where sleeps that lover who loved too well,
Sleeps, and dreams of the garden too,
Where the pansies purple and golden grew.
He will presently rise to the morn of rain,
And to work with his comrades in crime again.
And she who last night was alone with her woe,
To-night to the ball in town will go,
Over her jewelled fan will smile,
And hearts less foolish than his beguile;
And they all would deem it beyond belief,
This bitter story of love and grief,
Writ on the blood-tipped autumn-leaf.

THE GUEST OF CHRISTMAS EVE.

THE moon is hidden by a cloud,
The earth is folded in the snow;
The orchard-boughs are strung with pearls,
And hushed are all the winds that blow.
No hand will let the knocker fall
To-night, and I am free to weave

My fancies by the blazing hearth,
And spend alone my Christmas eve.

The firelight lends an added bloom
To yonder pictured gay coquette;
Between the mirror and the door
The shadows dance a minuet.
One takes the crimson easy-chair,
A trifle bolder than the rest.
Ah! if the shade of my dead love
Might come instead and be my guest!

The waxen tapers flame and flare
As if a spirit passed them by;
I hear the watch-dog howl without,
I feel a phantom presence nigh;
And see the seated shadow change—
But feel no fear, nor yet surprise—
Into a tall, reclining form,
With dusky hair and deep-blue eyes.

The same as when we walked in joy
Amid the summer's wealth of flowers;
The same as when he kissed me last,
In winter's black and bitter hours,

He sits before me now, for love
Has broken through the dreamless rest
Of death, and brought him back to me,
On Christmas eve, to be my guest.

The fire burns low, from far away
I hear a silver-sounding bell ;
He cannot speak, the dead are dumb,
I dare not, lest I break the spell.
So in the dim uncertain light,
We gaze into each other's eyes,
As when we sat in olden days,
Full in the light of Paradise.

The clock is on the stroke of twelve,
The tapers suddenly expire,
And louder sounds the silver bell,
And lower burns the flickering fire.
I feel the touch of icy lips,
By spirit hands my own are pressed ;
A long-drawn sigh is at my ear,
And he is gone, my Christmas guest.

Between the curtain's parted folds
A single ghostly moonbeam falls,
Strange gleams are on the mirror's face,
Strange echoes in the empty walls.

And loud and long, o'er vale and hill,
The winter winds begin to blow,
And many and many a mile away,
He lieth deep beneath the snow.

I know not if I slept and dreamed,
Or if it really came to pass ;
For many a month above his head,
Has lain the snow or grown the grass,
But this I know, and sweet the thought—
Love broke the long eternal rest
Of death, and brought him back to me,
On Christmas eve, to be my guest !



A DREAM OF DEATH.

THEY say that my hand is whiter
Than a flake of the falling snow ;
They say that my foot is lighter
Than that of the timid doe ;
But I wonder would they remember,
These lovers gallant and gay,
If I died in a drear December,
The grave wherein I lay ?

Last night in the dark hours solemn
A curious dream had I,
A dream of a death-white column
Out under the open sky,
And I thought that I lay under,
All of my life-work done,
Below the sound of the thunder,
Out of the reach of the sun.

The church tower's long, black shadow
Lay deep on the tangled grass,
And afar in a neighboring meadow
I could hear the crickets pass.
So still was the place above me,
So utterly lone and drear—
Of all the men who love me,
Not one of them came near.

But lo ! I heard, as I listened,
A hand on the churchyard gate.
Who came when the cold stars glistened
Where I lay so desolate ?
Was it Robert, so loving and tender,
With the eyes so blue and true ;
Or Walter, the graceful and slender,
Who came in the dark and dew ?

He knelt in the midnight dreary,
With many a stifled moan—
Like a child with weeping aweary—
He leaned his face to the stone ;
And a thrill ran suddenly over
My frozen heart like a flame,
For I heard the voice of my lover,
And I heard him call my name.

And I knew that Walter was speeding
The hours with revel and wine,
And a love-tale Robert was reading
In a newer face than mine,
For it was the one man only
I slighted, as plain and cold,
Who came where they left me, lonely,
With the lilies under the mold.

I tried, to the youth who found me,
My love and my grief to tell ;
But those funeral lilies around me,
They held me under a spell !
I knew that his steps were going,
And struggled and prayed in vain,
And woke—to the blithe wind blowign,
The dash of the crystal rain.

I rose and parted the curtains,
And looked to the hill-side far,
Through the wavering mist ascertain,
Where the marble head-stones are ;
And I breathed a prayer of thanksgiving,
With folded hands and a tear ;
It was good to be yet with the living,
Not stark on a flower-decked bier.

But forever and ever a lily
Fills me with horror and gloom,
It brings with its odor the chilly,
Damp air of the shroud and the tomb.
Like the broad, bright light of the morning
A light on my spirit streams,
For what if the dream was a warning,
Since the Bible tells of dreams !

And so if you see me walking
In the sunset by-and-by—
Walking and tenderly talking
With a youth who is plain and shy,
And if in the golden hours
Of the spring we happen to wed,
You may say that the bridal flowers
Grew out of the dust of the dead.

A WINTER IDYL.

BETWEEN the broad oak's branches bare
And elm-trees, like a great balloon
Inflated with the frosty air,
Rose slowly up the winter moon ;
I watched her clear the belt of firs,
And fill with light the skies above :
As radiant was my soul as hers,
For I'd a letter from my love.

The wind was high, the hour was late ;
Day built herself a funeral pyre
Before the heaven's western gate,
And died amid its crimson fire.
Across the dead leaves to me came
My lover in its ruddy light,
And clasped, and called me by my name,
And kissed me, and the world was bright.

I looked at morning through the net
Of naked ivy o'er the pane,
And saw the prints his feet had set
Upon the brown grass of the lane ;

For all around them, elf or fay,
Till in the high road they were lost,
Between the midnight and the day,
Had set the fairy flowers of frost.

The winter moon grew pale, and pined
And faded in the distance dim ;
The sunset waned, and left behind
The evening shadows, gray and grim.
I saw in glittering globes of dew
The frail frost-blossom melting pass,
Until there only lay a few
Bright tear-drops on the withered grass.

But many a moon will wax and wane,
And many a sunset light the hours,
And many a frost-flower bloom again
To deck the graves of summer's flowers,
Yet nevermore my lover's hand
Upon the garden gate will be,
For in a far-off foreign land
He sleeps, and has forgotten me.

THE ARCTIC WATCH.

I.

I SEE upon the frozen foam
A little vessel far from home,
 The yacht Jeannette.
The polar star above her lies,
A sword of light set in the skies;
The arctic wave is on her deck,
And Hope has left the broken wreck.
Bereft of all things else but Fate,
 And sinking, sinking, sinking yet,
Behold her lying desolate,
 The lost Jeannette!

II.

Dead heroes on a field of snow.
One lonely heart, that, beating slow,
 Yet dreams of home,
Where golden fruits are on the bough,
And all the woods are crimson now—
The last of that high-hearted band—
Keeps vigil in that bitter land,

And, crowned with thorns of frost and pain,
Lives o'er his boyhood's days again,
And in that drear death-watch uplifts
His gaze, and sees beyond the drifts,
The iceberg tall, a crystal gate
By which his risen comrades wait:
Not weak and worn like men who died,
But robed and crowned and glorified.
Familiar voices greet his ear,
The lips that love him call him dear;
The cruel thorns that bind his head
Melt off, and he is crowned instead
With lilies of the pure in heart.
His icy garments fall apart:
He stands a form of living light.
He joins his comrades in their flight;
They pass the sword set in the skies,
No waste, white deserts more to roam;
They upward, upward, upward rise,
And win the gates of Paradise—
Oh, welcome home!

LEGEND OF HALLOWE'EN.

It is the night of Hallowe'en,
The way is dark and drear,
But Letty has a brave young heart,
And Letty knows no fear;
She seeks the churchyard's lonely bound,
Where all is black and bare,
To meet the lover yet unknown
And strew the hemp seed there.

Black, black against the starless sky
The stately belfry stands;
And as she passes o'er the graves,
The dead reach up their hands.
For now they break the bonds of death,
And walk the earth a space;
The shroud upon the fleshless form,
The mold upon the face.

Her slender fingers sow the seed,
A mystic song she sings,
While all about she hears the stir
Of strange, unearthly wings.

Twice she has passed the church around ;
Her cheek was like a rose
When she began, but now 'tis pale
As winter's virgin snows.

A footstep o'er the fallen leaves
Comes swiftly on behind.
Far off she hears the midnight hour
Clang out upon the wind,
And other sounds that thrill and chill
The red blood in her veins,
The rattling noise of human bones,
The clank of rusty chains,

She looks behind and deadly fear
Her lily brow bedews ;
No gallant youth with ardent eyes
And lofty plume pursues.
Her lover is a skeleton,
In trailing grave clothes drest ;
He reaches out his gruesome arms
And takes her to his breast.

Next day they seek her far and wide
Beneath the churchyard yew ;
Upon a sunken grave they find
The ribbon from her shoe.

The village belle by mortal eye
Will nevermore be seen,
But long the pretty maids will tell
Her fate on Hallowe'en.

BARTHOLDI'S STATUE OF LIBERTY.

As Venus of old from the ocean arose,
With locks like the sun and a breast like the snows
So Liberty standeth, her feet in the foam,
And lighteth the world to the gates of her home.

The cannon may roar, and the trumpets may blow,
Her breast's to the storm, and her face to the foe,
And the torch in her hand burneth over the same—
From the fount of the lightning she borrowed its flame.

The sea-weary mariner sees it afar,
Shining out o'er the tumult of waves like a star.
The cloud may the beam of the planet obscure
But Liberty's light will forever endure.

When the wing of the midnight is dark on the air,
And drowned men go by her with sea-weeded hair,

Like eagles weary alighting to rest,
The spirits of heroes will meet on her breast.

Long, long in the harbor her watch may she keep,
While the great ships before her come in from the deep !
With the torch in her hand, and her feet in the foam,
To the gates of the city she lighteth them home.



TWO NEW YEAR EVES.

L.—AT THE BALL.

THE moon of New Year's Eve was bright,
And climbed a sky without a cloud ;
The earth of New Year's Eve was white
And still, as if it wore a shroud.
A stately mansion stood aloof,
With snowy ivy on the wall,
And windows lit from base to roof—
The moon looked down and saw it all.

The strains of music, clear and sweet,
Flowed out from every opened door ;
Light-footed dancers gaily beat
A merry measure on the floor.

A youth and maiden drew apart
From others, by a casement tall,
And he was vexed and sore of heart—
The moon looked in and saw it all.

His arched black brows o'er ebon-lashed
Dark eyes were bending sinister,
The while his haughty glances flashed
Deep love, deep anger, both at her.
While in her robes of rich brocade,
With pearls to hold her hair in thrall,
In sweet confusion stood the maid—
The moon looked in and saw it all.

He spoke: "You shall not dance again
With him to-night, while I am by."
"And I will dance with Harry Vane,
If so I please!" she made reply.
"Then break your troth, and so be free
To dance with him at every ball!"
"Here is your ring, good sir," said she—
The moon looked in and saw it all.

She left him with a nod and smile,
With Harry Vane to walk away;
The music, stilled a little while,
Burst forth again, and twice as gay.

He bowed his head upon the sill :
" Oh, that those words I might recall !"
The moon went gliding upward still,
Nor pitied, though she saw it all.

II—UNDER THE PALL.

Another New Year's Eve drew near.
A dull, red sunset burned between
The rifted clouds, and showed a drear
Procession through the winter scene—
Cold earth beneath the mourners' feet,
Cold earth beneath the velvet pall,
And through the clouds an incomplete
Cold moon that looked upon it all.

Not in the churchyard's hallowed bound,
His good old father's dust beside,
But in unconsecrated ground,
Alone, they laid the suicide.
Young Mrs. Vane, but three days wed,
Came driving by : " At last year's ball
We parted last, and now he's dead ;
Oh ! moon, that night you saw it all.

" Ah, love, and pride, and jealousy
Are each alone a fearful thing ;
But all together, and the three
Can do more evil than a king.

I loved him then, I love him yet ;"
She checked a tear about to fall ;
" Now I am wed, and must forget,
But moon, pale moon, you know it all."

THE COUNT'S CRIME.

THE grim Count Rupert was gray and old,
Haggard and bent from an evil life,
But proud his castle, and bright his gold,
So he bought him a fair young wife—
A handsome creature, with raven braids,
A cheek that rivalled the crimson rose,
The soft black eyes of the Spanish maids,
And a Grecian's brow and nose.

He knew a woman so fair as this
Could not, to a man so bent and gray,
Give the warmth of her red lip's kiss,
Nor the love in her heart that lay ;
And so one night when he found his bride
Gone from the chamber where she slept,
And the door in the way she went left wide,
He softly after her crept.

He heard the sweep of her mantle's fold
Against the leaves, and saw the gleam
Of its ruby velvet flowered with gold,
And—stay! did he wake or dream?
Or did he see, by the moon's pale light,
Streaming down through the orange boughs,
The nodding plumes of a gallant knight,
And hear true lover's vows?

II.

The sun rose over the southern town,
Gilded the crosses and spires anew,
Kissed the flower girl's cheek to a deeper brown,
And withered her violets, too.
But the grim old nobleman's lady fair
Came not in her coach, with its trappings gay,
To buy her blossoms or take the air
On the shore of the bright blue bay.

The butterflies bright and the dusty bees
Missed her, too, in the garden-bowers,
And a bird in the boughs of the orange trees
Found blood on the waxen flowers.
The grim Count Rupert, when questioned, said,
"She flitted away to a cooler clime
When the dawn in the eastern sky was red.
I follow her after a time."

III.

Weeds ran over the winding walks,
Flowers were strangled, and founts ran dry.
In the courts the prickly cactus-stalks
Grew thick and rank and high.
Ivy clambered the dark stone wall,
And clothed my lady's tower in green,
And wove o'er the narrow casements tall
A close and verdurous screen.

But over the window of her room
It grew the thickest, as if to hide
From eye of mortal the dust and gloom,
And the awful sight inside.
Close were its glossy leaves o'erlaid,
Small the bars of the lattice, too,
But one day a slender sunbeam strayed
That way, and glided through.

It wakened a diamond's living light,
And gleamed on a golden wedding-band,
Where, after the months of darkness, bright
They hung on a moldering hand—
My lady's hand, that was once so fair.
All that was left of her beauty now
Were the long, loose locks of raven hair
That pall-like shadowed her brow.

And as she tied and put in place
The kerchief with its fall of lace,
She set the glowing blossom there,
The rose that bloomed for her to wear.

The evening star was in the west,
The bird had sought its leafy nest;
Her lover's hand was at the door,
Her lover's foot was on the floor,
His eager arms around her thrown,
His fond lips quick to meet her own—
"My Mabel, you to-night are fair,"
He murmured, "as the rose you wear."

THE COQUETTE'S ALBUM.

UPON that table small, between
The window and the painted screen,
You'll find the volume full in view;
'Tis clasped with gold and bound in blue.
Come sit beside me here, I pray,
And see me turn the years away
With every pictured page, and call
Them back to me, my lovers all.

This was a young divine, whose eyes
Saw nothing lower than the skies,
Whose every tone and look and pace
Was full of high and saintly grace.
When at the church I saw the light
From windows stained with colors bright,
In rainbow glory round him fall,
I thought I loved him best of all.

This was a youth whose eagle glance
Had swept the prairies' wide expanse;
Whose arm had plied from shore to shore,
In waters wild, the fearless oar.
When first I happened to behold
His bright, dark eyes and bearing bold,
His graceful figure straight and tall,
I said, "I love him best of all!"

Here is a face in which the pride
Of ancient blood is soon descried;
And yet on Mount Olympus trod
In days of old no Grecian god
More beautiful, and when above
My chair he leaned, and breathed of love
In murmurs soft and musical,
I knew I loved him best of all.

The light is growing very dim,
And we will close the book with him.
Tears on my cheek, you say? Ah, no!
'Tis but the fire's too ardent glow.
One—'tis the young divine—is wed;
And one—the dark-eyed youth—is dead;
One in far lands beyond my call—
And yet I think I loved them all.

LOVE'S TRAGEDY.

GLARE of sun on the city square,
Clamor of bells in the belfry brown,
Matrons jewelled and maidens fair,
Mammon clad in a bishop's gown,
Frost of satin, and fall of lace,
Wilting wreaths and the clink of gold,
A smothered heart and a smiling face;
That is the way that Love was sold.

Gilded glitter and sick perfumes,
Lamps that burned to the morning's verge,
Fumes of wine in the stifling rooms,
Sound of voices that swell and surge

To and fro in his dizzy brain,
And sickened spirit with faintness filled,
A shuddering sigh, and a pang of pain;
That is the way that Love was killed.

Under the sunlight, under the blue.
See! what is it that we have found,
Deep in the daisies, drenched in dew,
Something like to a little mound?
Hark! above it the wild bird sings;
Hush! draw near with a quiet tread,
Speak as you would of sacred things;
This is the place where Love lies dead.



